

MIRACULOUS EPISODES
OF OUR LADY OF LOURDES



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Miraculous episodes of Lourdes : continu



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THE MIRACULOUS EPISODES OF LOURDES.

THE
MIRACULOUS EPISODES OF LOURDES.

(Revised)
BY
HENRI LASSERRE.

CONTINUATION AND SECOND VOLUME OF
OUR LADY OF LOURDES.

TRANSLATED FROM THE SEVENTEENTH EDITION WITH
THE EXPRESS PERMISSION OF THE AUTHOR

Margaret
BY
M. E. MARTIN.

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LETTER FROM MONSIEUR HENRI LASSERRE TO THE TRANSLATOR.

A Mademoiselle MARGARET MARTIN, *traductrice Anglaise des*
"Episodes Miraculeux de Lourdes".

MADemoisELLE,

Je suis heureux de donner mon entière approbation à votre traduction anglaise des "*Episodes Miraculeux de Lourdes*," que vous allez publier chez Messieurs Burns et Oates. Vous avez fait cette œuvre avec amour, avec zèle, avec piété, demandant à la Vierge Sainte, dont vous racontez les bienfaits, de guider votre plume et d'illuminer votre style. J'ai l'espérance qu'elle vous aura exaucée et qu'elle bénira ces pages, écrites pour la diffusion de sa gloire et la propagation de son culte.

Qu'elle daigne s'en servir pour affermir dans la vraie foi ceux qui y sont déjà, et pour y conduire ceux qui s'en sont écartés.

Veuillez recevoir, Mademoiselle, l'expression de ma très-haute considération en

Xo. et B. M. V. I.,

HENRI LASSERRE.

LES BRETOUX, AU COUX, PRÈS SIORAC,
DORDOGNE, 19th April, 1884.

TRANSLATION OF MONSIEUR HENRI LASSERRE'S
LETTER TO THE TRANSLATOR.

To Miss MARGARET MARTIN, *English Translator of*
"The Miraculous Episodes of Lourdes".

MADemoisELLE,

I am happy to be able to give my entire approbation to the English Translation of "*The Miraculous Episodes of Lourdes*" that you are about to publish at Messrs. Burns & Oates'. You have done your work with love, zeal, and piety, trusting to the Blessed Virgin, whose favours you relate, to guide your pen and inspire your thoughts.

May she fulfil your desires and bless these pages, written for the diffusion of her glory, and the propagation of her power and goodness ; and may she deign to employ them, not only to strengthen those who are already of the True Faith, but also to bring back to the Fold such as have wandered from it.

Receive, Mademoiselle, the expression of my highest esteem.

In Xo. and B. M. V. I.,

HENRI LASSERRE.

LES BRETOUX, AU COUX, PRÈS SIORAC,
DORDOGNE, 19th April, 1884.

DECLARATION OF THE AUTHOR.

IN obedience to the prescriptions of our Holy Mother the Catholic Church, we formally declare :

That we submit all we have written, without any restriction, to the judgment of the Holy See.

That in whatever concerns the extraordinary cures we may relate (even when we employ the usual word *Miracle*, and when we point out the circumstances which seem to us a proof of divine intervention), we do not presume to decide of ourselves on their supernatural character, neither do we wish to give to our words any other authority than that of a purely historical testimony.

That, when we happen, in speaking of pious and venerated persons, to use terms employed by the Church in the causes of Saints, we have no intention of anticipating the judgment of the Apostolic See, which alone has the right of pronouncing in such matters.

HENRI LASSERRE.

TO MY DEAR WIFE,

MADAME HENRI MONZIE-LASSERRE.

THIS BOOK, WHICH RELATES THE MIRACLES OF THE DIVINE GOODNESS, CONTAINS THE EXPRESSION OF MY MOST ELEVATED THOUGHTS, MY HIGHEST ASPIRATIONS, AND THE DEEPEST FEELINGS WITH WHICH GOD HAS ENDOWED ME. I DEDICATE IT TO HER WHO, IN THIS WORLD, POSSESSES MY WHOLE HEART.

AND OF THOSE WHO MAY BE TOUCHED BY THE PERUSAL OF THESE PAGES, I ASK A PRAYER FOR THE BELOVED COMPANION OF MY LIFE, FOR OUR DEAR MARIE-MARTHE, AND FOR MYSELF.

HENRI MONZIE-LASSERRE.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

I.

THE book we now publish is the continuation of the one we wrote fourteen years ago, entitled OUR LADY OF LOURDES.

In considering the Pilgrimage founded by the Blessed Virgin at the Grotto of Lourdes, and in seeking to examine its history, we see opening before us a quadruple and vast horizon of different and sometimes of opposite aspects, as if that Land of Miracles had also its own four cardinal points. Whichever way the observer turns, immense fields of research spread out before him, inviting investigation and courting enquiry.

Before and above all, shines forth in incomparable brilliancy the direct work of God and the Immaculate Virgin, in innumerable graces showered down on Christians; inexplicable cures of body and soul; sudden conversions; strength given to the weak; peace restored to troubled hearts; consolation lavished on the inconsolable. Sometimes it is at the Grotto, sometimes at the Sacred Spring; or the

Piscina or the Basilica, places consecrated by the Apparition of the Blessed Virgin, that these touching interventions of All-Powerful Goodness take place—sometimes at a distance, in sanctuaries erected to the glory of Our Lady of Lourdes, at Oostacker or Constantinople, in the towns and villages of Europe, or the depths of American wilds—or again in some poor solitary room where Her Name has been invoked, and the water made sacred by association with Her memory has been piously drunk. The eye pauses and reposes with delight on this view of the horizon, and the soul rises and expands in its contemplation. The morning sun is not brighter, nor the early dawn more fresh. Indeed, the grandest scenes of this world are unworthy to be compared to the splendour and purity of such a spectacle. It is Heaven itself inclining towards earth. It is God amongst men.

The second spectacle, almost as admirable as the first, is that of the endless stream of Christians hastening from all countries, and by every means of transport to respond to the call of Mary; drinking with pious eagerness of the Fountain of Mercy, praying in fraternal union, and forming but one family with one heart under the eye of the Father of All. The rich helps the poor, the strong pilgrim carries the infirm one: lays him carefully on his couch, watches at his bedside, dresses his wounds, bathes him in the Piscina, suffers with his sufferings, and prays with his prayer.

Charity, active and holy, clothed in every costume, using every means, speaking every tongue, being "all things to all men"; Charity, sacred and sweet, moves about among the multitudes, firing them with her example, and warming their hearts with her rays. She has paid the journey of the penniless and will pay his return, she has sheltered the homeless, clothed the naked, fed the hungry, and still she burns with the desire to spend and be spent in well-doing.

If there were really longitudes and latitudes in the regions of the mind, it might be said that this incessant procession, this universal Pilgrimage, these magnificent crowds represent the lovely zone of the South, with its glorious sunshine and azure firmament, its movement, its activity, its brilliant colours, its luxuriant vegetation, its exquisite flowers, its sonorous dialects, its ardent speech, its enthusiastic songs. All is warmth and light, and true fraternity. Can there be anything more touching than this fugitive vision of what the world would be if the world were Christian? It is the movement of earth rising towards Heaven. It is man with God.

In the third place, there is at Lourdes an institution called "The Work of the Grotto," that is, the spiritual and temporal administration of the Pilgrimages.

Universal Charity turning towards the guardians of the Sanctuary has said to them: "I have erected the Basilica in obedience to the commands of the

Blessed Virgin, I have bought ground, I have planted trees under whose shelter the multitudes that Jesus loves may pray, walk, and repose themselves on this favoured spot. *Misereor super turbas.* And now, here are still millions upon millions; the rich man's treasure poured out in secret, as Our Lord commands; the widow's mite; the day's pay of the workman; the savings of the poor. Employ these sacred riches in sacred uses. Build houses for the poor, lodgings for the pilgrims, Piscinas for the sick. Multiply and enlarge the divine workshops where the Divine Worker accomplishes His wonders. Place in them, before the eyes of the suffering and sorrowful, the statue of Mary to speak to them of Hope, and the image of Jesus on the Cross to teach them Resignation. Let them find oratories carefully prepared for their devotions, and soft couches on which to repose their weakness. Piously prepare, in imitation of Veronica, cloths to wipe their bodies and linen to cover them. How many poor creatures come here, alone, neglected, and powerless to help themselves, of whom, at the Last Day, Christ will say—"It was I". Those receive with open arms! Let your Brothers and your Sisters of Charity glory in being always ready, attentive, and helpful, devoted heart and hand to the cause of the suffering, so that none may have to say here, as at the Probatika Pond, "I have no man to put me into the water". Teach them to love God and to bless His Church, and the world, frivolous and unconverted, when it

sees you the willing servants of disease and sickness, and utterly forgetful of self, may perhaps take the lesson home and blush for its vain expenditure and selfish pleasures.

Preserve also, with religious care, for future ages, as an inviolable patrimony and a priceless historical relic, the venerated spot that the Virgin has honoured eighteen times with Her presence, and never suffer that visible page of Her divine history to be effaced or altered. "The gift of God has been deposited with you for the use of mankind." . . . Thus spoke Catholic Charity; thus did she counsel and thus does she hope. Such were the accents of that voice of the people which is truly the voice of God..

Around all centres of grace founded here below by the mercy of God, the very nature of things and the efforts of the Irreconcilable Enemy accumulate many dangers:—Riches, which are a strength and a power to those privileged spots, become at the same time a serious danger, involving, alas! unless resisted, the spirit of vain pomp that lavishes without counting, and the spirit of trading and lucre that collects and amasses: . . .

The authorities who accept the redoubtable functions of administering with their mortal hands these sanctuaries of prayer and benediction, should make it their first and most important duty to protect them from such attacks, and keep them pure from such taints; to check on their threshold the invasion of worldly splendour, to render them more sacred in

readers in a compact series of short accounts, a hurried narrative of each and all of them. We think, and we have always thought, that such accumulations of superficial facts can only produce a superficial effect on those who read them. We will even go so far as to say that, contrary to the laudable object pursued by the pious authors of such compilations, the reader often turns away from such books with a feeling of vague dislike, and mortal dullness, which, however, he dare not acknowledge even to himself, as it might be taken for indifference or lukewarmness towards the wonders of God.

From what unknown cause does this singular and truly regrettable consequence proceed? It comes solely from the anxious desire of the narrator to relate, one after the other in rapid succession, all the supernatural facts he can collect, without giving himself either the trouble or the length of time necessary to go thoroughly into a single one of them. Like the guide in public museums and collections, he hurries the reader indefinitely along the common surface of things and neglects to introduce him to their intimate life, their providential workings—that is, to their real interest and their supreme beauty. Hence, fatigue instead of repose, and satiety in the place of attraction.

We have thought it desirable to adopt an entirely different plan. If scientific men, if Botanists for example, devote sometimes many years, or even

their whole lives, to the study of one plant, or one special tree ; if they discover in the mysteries of its germination, the formation of its roots, the direction of its fibres, the movement of its sap, the proportions of its trunk, the arrangement of its leaves, the interlacing of its branches, the roughness of its bark, the blossoming of its flower, and the nature of its fruit, admirable secrets of universal wisdom, it seems to us that a Christian, when studying one of the miracles of the Most High, should not be less conscientious, less zealous, less persevering in undertaking and pursuing a similar work of minute investigation and patient analysis. To examine the supernatural event on all sides and in all its details ; consider its course ; study its causes and most distant preparations ; penetrate, so to speak, to its very essence ; determine its real character ; and bring its chief features into relief :—Such is not, alas ! what we have done, but what we have tried to do.

Experience, or rather the Higher Hand by which we have been guided, marked out this path for us from the instant of our first researches on the subject of the miraculous interventions of Our Lady of Lourdes ; and we cannot better explain how we have been led in this direction, than by quoting our own words written some time ago :—

“ At Bordeaux, at Tartas, at Nay, at Lourdes, wherever I have examined or enquired deeply into any one of these exceptional manifestations from Our High, I have remarked, with secret awe, a surprising

the truth, my weaker intellect foresaw nothing, had no presentiment of anything, and I owe it to Providence alone, that I have been guided by the movements of grace towards these marvellous shores."

III.

Some of these narratives of miracles have cost me years of preparation. It has only been by numberless interrogations, intimate talks, heart to heart, with those whose history I relate, or with their families or their friends, sometimes indeed by a few days of life in common under the same roof, at the same table, by the same fireside, that I have come to know, little by little, and see gradually unrolling before my eyes in their admirable order, the different scenes of these miraculous dramas.

How often and how painfully have I thought, while devoting myself to these researches, of the deplorable error, the immense fault, committed by those inconsiderate minds who seek to embellish by legendary additions the marvels that it pleases God to accomplish here below. Forgetting that the duty and the sacred mission of the historian "consists in finding everything in his subject and in seeking nothing beyond it," they have preferred the easy pleasure of apocryphal inventions to the courageous labour of thoroughly studying and examining their subject with slow and indefatigable perseverance. And yet, had they sought the Truth, they would in

addition have discovered the Beautiful, and would not have worked in vain. What is called Art, the great Art of History is attainable in no other way, and reality would have shown them treasures before which the fictitious productions of their imagination would have perished like dross. For imagination is of man and Truth is of God.

IV.

Before publishing these narratives I was desirous, for the greater certainty and guarantee of History, for my own sake and for that of the public both friendly and hostile, to have their rigorous exactness controlled by the direct witness of those Christians into whose life I proposed to initiate the reader. I therefore communicated to them and their families the manuscript or the proofs of my work. All the episodes which follow (except the last which regards myself) are preceded by their declarations and signed with their names. By thus associating themselves with this humble book, all those of whom I write and who have received from God the grace of a Miracle, rise up to say with me—"This is the Truth!"

V.

We have written these pages amidst the troubles and anxieties of our time, and with a heart oppressed by anguish and alarm, while wicked men, in the

pride of power, sacrilegiously endeavour to drive God from His true Temple of the human mind.

But, in proportion as our researches gave us a more profound knowledge of the events we now relate, our fears were dissipated and our hopes soared high.

For the many details of these episodes resolve themselves into a distinct, positive, imperious, and irresistible proof that the Sovereign Master of the world secretly and permanently intervenes in all the events that mark our lives. He intervenes everywhere and in everything, not only by those sudden and exceptional means that we call "Miracles," but by a gentle and continuous action, which, without disturbing the liberty of the human will, disposes and prepares the varied circumstances of our rapid passage on the surface of this world. If this be so, and if it be sometimes granted to our mortal vision to witness and verify it in the lives of individuals, can we for a moment suppose that the Almighty will stand aloof when the guidance of peoples, the progress of nations, the fate of Holy Church, and the future of Humanity, are at stake? He who so lovingly watches over the smallest leaf, will He not much more protect the whole tree? Whatever may be the disasters of our epoch; whatever the iniquities of which we are the saddened and indignant witnesses, whatever the persecutions against justice and truth, let us never forget that the earth is sustained by the hand of God; that, by His will,

it alternately passes from light to darkness, from storm to sunshine, from the frosts of winter to the heat of summer, and that He leads it by a way of which He alone possesses the secret, towards the goal predestined by Him from all eternity. *Nolite timere, pusillus grex.*

A Christian lady of talent once said: "God never permits Evil to interfere with Good, but to draw from the Evil itself a Good still greater".

VI.

Our first volume brought an immense joy and a signal honour to its unworthy author.

It decided Rome to break the silence it had till then maintained, and proclaim in a Brief addressed to the historian, "the luminous evidence" of the Apparitions of Mary at the Grotto of Lourdes, thus making that religious event a part of the treasures of the Catholic Faith.

This second volume of the same work appears in the year of grace, 1883, at the time when our Most Holy Father, Leo XIII., has just ordained an universal jubilee in memory of the twenty-fifth anniversary of that extraordinary event. May the pilgrims of the whole universe who crowd to the Rocks of Massabiella, pray God to bless this second part of our work as He has deigned to bless the first, and to use it, in time present and in time to

come, for the dissemination of light to the understandings, faith to the souls, and love to the hearts of all men.

H. L.

31st May, 1883.

DEDICATION.

THE Translator of these incomparable pages, desirous of associating with her work the cherished memory of her Native Land, dedicates it, with religious respect, to the Catholics of England. Both to such as enjoy the exalted privileges of the Children of the Faith, and to those whose generous and Catholic exercise of the noblest Christian virtues has acquired for them the glorious title of "The Soul of the Church".

May the Immaculate Mother of God ever preserve them within the sheltering folds of Her Royal Mantle, and vouchsafe them, hereafter, the grace to contemplate her ineffable and sovereign beauty through all eternity.

PARIS, *28th August, 1884.*

restored, leaving behind them a weight of suffering and infirmity that has lasted sometimes more than a quarter of a century; the ranks of the voluntary infirmarians and sick nurses who find in their devoted zeal for the sick members of Jesus Christ the secret source of a seemingly inexhaustible strength and energy, invulnerable to fatigue and indifferent to weariness; the members of the clergy indefatigable and ubiquitous, all things to all men, spending and being spent without counting and without measure, alternately administering the sacraments, exhorting the multitudes, leading the devotions, apparently needing no repose and certainly taking none; above all the genuine and cordial fraternity existing between the pilgrims of all classes and conditions, making of that picturesque grotto, sheltered by towering mountains and begirt by the sapphire zone of the Gave, a Paradise upon earth, a little corner of Heaven, a region where the device "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity," is carried out to the letter: the Liberty of God's children, the Equality of Christian faith, and the Fraternity of Christian charity.

Not the least interesting spectacle offered by this unique spot is that of the numbers of resuscitated persons miraculously healed of their infirmities who flock to Lourdes every year on a pilgrimage of thanksgiving, and offer in their own persons the public and irrefutable proof of the authenticity of the miracle.

Among them may be seen the Abbé de Musy, erect and imposing, his keen eyes and majestic height baffling the observer who vainly endeavours to picture him as having once been blind and helpless ; beside him the Abbé Antoine, genial and affable, the ready witness of the marvels accomplished in his friend ; and, again, the Abbé Dominique Sire, at whose Mass, sight, health, and vigour were restored to the Abbé de Musy. It is said of the Abbé Sire that he is the spoiled child of the Blessed Virgin. He has devoted his whole life to glorifying the Immaculate Conception. When the Vicar of Jesus Christ had proclaimed the spotless purity of the Mother of God, the Abbé Sire in his filial devotion would have had the whole world re-echo with the Decision of the Dogma. Inspired by that wish, he caused the Pontifical Bull to be translated into every known language and dialect, and copied out in illuminate text of infinite variety and incomparable beauty, employing sometimes the papyrus of Egypt, sometimes the silken textures of China, sometimes the ivory tablets of Hindostan, or the choicest kinds of paper manufactured in Europe and America. This unrivalled collection of cosmopolitan translations has been presented by the Abbé Sire to the Sovereign Pontiff.

Mademoiselle de Fontenay, Mlle. Lucie Fraiture, and many others also, faithfully make their annual visit to their Celestial Benefactress ; and the ranks of these favoured children of the Mother of Mercy

are daily swelled by new examples of Divine Compassion exercised on the sick and infirm.

Monsieur Lasserre never fails to testify to the beneficent power of the Blessed Virgin, by his presence at the Grotto of Lourdes during the time of the national pilgrimages. Untiring patience, delicate courtesy, high-bred consideration and Christian simplicity mark his intercourse with the pilgrims. The Translator gladly seizes this opportunity to express her grateful admiration for the benevolent generosity which has accompanied and encouraged her efforts, and made of her sojourn at Lourdes a never-to-be-forgotten period of delight and edification.

To those who have never seen Lourdes it might be suggested, that, if only out of mere curiosity, there would be a certain charm in visiting a spot unique upon earth, where in the heart of the nineteenth century the evangelical times of our Lord are revived and renewed strictly to the letter. "*The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are made clean, the deaf hear, to the poor the Gospel is preached.*"

M. M.

PARIS, 1884.

Humbert de Musy's young wife had been dead for some years, leaving her husband in inconsolable grief, and with his health irreparably injured by nights and days of incessant watching at the bedside of the wife who was dearer to him than himself, and whom he had vainly endeavoured to save. He was bent, but not with age, and suffered in all his joints from rheumatic pains, which rarely gave him any respite. His condition, however, was relatively bearable when compared with the cruel infirmities of his younger brother. It is the history of that younger brother which we are about to relate.

II.

During his childhood Victor de Musy had enjoyed excellent health. He was tall and handsome, and his clear-cut features recalled, but with a frank and benevolent expression, the celebrated type of the Bonaparts. Slender, active, of a well-knit frame, and foremost in all athletic exercises, he seemed to promise a healthy and vigorous future. But as he approached his seventeenth year, his health began seriously to fail. Although nothing in his appearance betrayed the change, he had become weak and delicate, and suffered continual pain, sometimes in his back, sometimes in his eyes, sometimes in his legs. He bore his sufferings with fortitude, his mind ripening prematurely in the habit he had acquired of patiently enduring them, and in the sedentary life they often obliged him to lead. He passed his time in prayer, meditation, and the company of books that lead to God; and at last he said one day to his parents:

"I feel that the Lord calls me; I should like to be a priest".

His parents were too profoundly Christian to think of offering any opposition to the vocation of their beloved son. But the father, who deemed it wise and prudent to expose that vocation to the test of time, was two years before giving his full consent, during which period the malady had increased and become a fresh obstacle. The Priest is a soldier, and as far as may be, the Church only admits into her ranks such men as are capable of supporting the innumerable fatigues of their sacred calling. It seemed as if Victor could never lay such a burden on his shoulders, for his body was as powerless as his mind was energetic; for which reason the authorities hesitated a long time before admitting him into the Seminary. Indeed, it was only after a decided improvement in his health that, on his own most pressing solicitations, the doors were at last opened to him. He entered the Seminary of Annecy in 1851.

He had not been there many months, however, before he began to feel the first attacks of a disease which eventually and little by little extended to all his members. This disease was no other than a gradual decay of the envelopes of the spinal marrow. All persons are aware—even those who have no knowledge of medical science—that affections of this nature nearly always produce partial or complete paralysis in some part of the human system. In the present case the larynx was first attacked, and the young man lost his voice entirely. He was consequently obliged to leave Annecy and return home.

His faith, his piety, and his ardent desire to devote

himself to the service of God grew and strengthened in the atmosphere of affliction. And thus several years passed away.

At last he made a pilgrimage to Tours, where, after praying long and fervently before the Sacred Face venerated in M. Dupont's house, Victor completely recovered his voice, and instantly took advantage of his cure to resume the interrupted course of his studies; but he did not return to Annecy, as the climate was considered too rigorous for him. He went, instead, to the Seminary of St. Sulpice, at Paris.

The health he had recovered in one way soon began to be compromised in others. During his residence at Saint-Sulpice, his sight grew so weak that he could not receive Holy Orders under the usual conditions. His great fervour, his high intellectual culture, and the manifest signs of his vocation, were so many reasons for not refusing him the humble place he solicited in the ranks of the clergy; he was received as sub-deacon, but with the most exceptional dispense of the Breviary, of which the obligation was replaced for him by that of the daily recital of the holy Rosary.

And then, as if physical light diminished in him in proportion as spiritual light increased and he gradually drew nearer to the sanctuary of the Sun of Justice, his eyes became so bad, that when he was ordained a priest, on the 24th of September, 1859, at the age of thirty-one, it was found necessary to go even beyond the dispensation of the Breviary. It was impossible for him to read the large print of the Missal, and he received permission to say one single mass, which he knew by heart, beginning: *Salve, sancta Parens, enixa puerpera Regem.*

It was the mass of the Blessed Virgin, Mother of God and Consolation of the Afflicted.

What a *fête* the celebration of that first mass was for him! It took place in the chapel of Digoine the day after his ordination. No conqueror entering a vanquished citadel in triumph, after a prolonged siege full of danger and fatigue; no king, mounting the steps of a long-disputed throne, ever felt more exultingly happy than the young priest when he went up to the altar for the first time.

His mother, Madame de Musy, had in her possession a relic which she regarded as an inestimable treasure. It was the amice of an eminent priest of our own times, proclaimed Venerable by the voice of the Church.* The Abbé de Musy wished to associate this precious relic with his solemn entry on his priestly functions, therefore he wore, at the celebration of his first mass, the amice of the Curé of Ars.

Having thus attained to the supreme accomplishment of the ambition of his childhood and youth, he consecrated the Body of the Lord every morning in the chapel of the paternal mansion, and distributed the Bread of Life to those from whom he had received his being, and to the old servants, bent with age, who once had watched over his cradle. His mother, his father, his brother, his sister, the old housekeeper Claudine,

* The amice is the first part of the liturgic vestment worn by the priest at the celebration of Mass. It is a sort of little linen mantle, the upper part of which goes round the neck, while the lower part covers the shoulders and back. During a retreat made by Madame de Musy at Ars, the amice had been given her, after much entreaty, by the venerable Curé, who entertained a respectful friendship for her, and considered her as a soul especially favoured of God.

and all the domestics, communicated from his hand. Not being able to administer an ordinary living, his parish was composed of the narrow but beloved circle of home. Filial and fraternal compensation !

But, alas ! in 1862, only two years after his ordination, his legs were attacked in their turn, and soon became useless and motionless. The Abbé de Musy could no longer mount to the sanctuary, nor even stand upright, and he saw himself forced from that time to abandon the celebration of Mass. Paralysis, following its course, had torn him from the promised land, and exiled him from the Altar. He was then thirty-four years of age. Contrary to the general order of human economy, his youth had passed in a gradual decrease of vitality, and at the age when a man is in the full vigour of his prime, he found himself bowed down and helpless with infirmity.

III.

Whenever it is question of the different miseries which overwhelm humanity, the mind turns naturally back to the Biblical type of suffering. But it must be acknowledged that, more fortunate than Job, the Abbé de Musy was not abandoned and rejected by those dearest to him.

Around his person and his sufferings were grouped a devoted family, softening by their attentions the bitterness of his trials, and, if we might hazard such a comparison, forming for his untimely misfortunes a downy pillow, a couch of repose, relief, and peace.

In that family one figure especially commanded respect and attracted attention. To introduce it to the

readers is the only means of initiating them into the intimate life of the Château of Digoine.

Madame de Musy, then about sixty-five, was the type of the Valiant Woman of the Old Testament, but with all the pious tenderness and ardent charity of the Christian of later times. *Orabat et Laborabat*. She lived for God, and God dwelt in her. The brightness, we had almost said the glory, of her virtues illuminated the ancient Château and all the little corner of Burgundy that surrounded it. The mother of the paralytic priest realised in our century the religious type of the châtelaine, such as it is sometimes shown to us by the Lives of the Saints or the Golden Legend, in the old feudal burghs of the Middle Ages. Above all, she rendered her husband happy. "The heart of her husband," says the Scripture, "doth safely trust in her, she will render him good and not evil all the days of her life." For half a century that sublime prophecy of the Scriptures had been realised in the house of the Count de Musy.

She had brought up her two sons and her daughter in the love of God and of their fellow-creatures, and she watched with equal solicitude over the numerous domestics who composed her household and whom she regarded as the second degree of her family. If her children loved her as a mother, her servants loved her as a benefactress. All venerated her, and each one, impregnated as it were with her spirit, and guessing her thoughts, obeyed her at every hour of the day without her ever having occasion to give an order. It was the reign of intellect and the empire of love. Like Elizabeth of Hungary, she had a special predilection for the poor and the unhappy. After morning prayer, Mass

and meditation, she inaugurated each day by the touching exercise of works of mercy.

As early as ten in the morning, a procession of the sick and indigent might be seen coming towards the Château to seek from her hand the help that was never refused them. "I have just been knocking at God's door," she would then say as she finished her oraison; "now God is knocking at mine."

Among her visitors were the needy of every sort. One wanted a warm covering for winter; another, broth, or meat, or medicine for some sick person detained at home; another asked for baby linen; several arrived limping, or their arms in slings, to have their wounds dressed.

For Madame de Musy had determined, not only to have a medicine chest for the distribution of remedies, but to devote herself personally to the care of the sick poor; and for that purpose she had studied in her youth, with extreme care and a rare perfection, the first secrets of the art of healing. No one knew better than she how to prescribe an antidote for a fever or a cooling draught for a restless patient. Every sort of suffering found its specific where she was; she knew what it ought to be, she had it and she gave it; nay, more, her noble hands were made the servants of pain, binding up wounds, dressing ulcers, spreading over each sore the healing ointment that was to calm and cure it. Or with a large apron on, like a Sister of Charity, she would take by turns from her case of instruments, either a pair of scissors for cutting away dead or proud flesh, or nitrate of silver for burning it off, or a curved needle for sewing up a wound. Everything was done with

thoughtful care and a feeling of tender commiseration. Nothing could surpass the firmness and gentleness of her operations and dressings; she had if one might so express it, the dexterity of love—her fingers were influenced by the delicacy of her nature.

In some cases she would say: "What you have the matter with you is beyond my reach, you must see the doctor. Sit down and warm yourself while I send for him." Then the doctor would come, and the admirable sick nurse would take another lesson from him as she stood by while he attended the patient.

The labourers and vine-dressers to whom some accident had happened, perhaps a cut or a sprain, would hasten to Madame de Musy from all the neighbourhood, and from many leagues round. If anyone asked them: "Where are you going in this state, my good man?" the answer would be: "I am going to be cured by the 'Good Lady'!"

"The Good Lady!" It was the name, the only name, by which she was known in the whole country-side. To the question so often asked—"What is glory?" we might reply, "True glory is this!"

Madame de Musy had a lieutenant, a right arm, a helper after her own heart. Claudine was always near her mistress, and at a sign from her, after the wound had been dressed, or the sprain bound up, the old housekeeper would go and fetch from her inexhaustible cupboards and store-rooms, clothes, linen, or food—remedies of another sort for the dire evil of want—which were distributed with wisdom and judgment.

Many of these poor people brought full baskets with them, which they emptied on the table under the eye

of the traditional Claudine. Everywhere else they simply asked an alms, but beneath this charitable roof they effected an exchange. The "Good Lady" had found means to make the weakest of those poor disinherited ones work without fatigue for the common good. She had taught them to know a certain number of medicinal plants, and had said to them, "When you see them on your road, pick them and bring them to me. In that way, you, who are poor, will exercise charity towards the sick."

So they made a collection of simples ; and going from Digoine with their baskets filled to the brim with succulent provisions in exchange for the grass of the fields, having received besides a most cordial "Thank you," from the mistress of the house, the poor creatures would depart with a certain delightful consciousness of having been public benefactors.

Whoever was in need or suffering, no matter what their Belief or Unbelief, their conduct or misconduct, were sure to find easy access to the "Good Lady". She often used to say : "Our Lord never made any distinction between the 'deserving' or the 'undeserving' poor. If they are unhappy, it is a sufficient reason for helping them. God alone is the judge."

"God alone is the judge !" That thought guided her conduct, regulated her speech, and controlled even her silence. Notwithstanding the depth of her convictions and the natural vivacity of her disposition, she was never heard to speak ill, either of those whose ideas were opposed to hers, of persons who did not follow the path she trod herself, nor yet, which is still more rare in this world, of her neighbours, her acquaint-

ances, or her friends. Evil speaking, remarks on the personal affairs of others, on their faults or defects, fault-finding, back-biting—all those sins of speech which form the substance of most conversation in the country—were carefully excluded from the Château of Digoine.

Madame de Musy suffered cruelly and burned with indignation if a word prejudicial to others was uttered in her presence, but she controlled herself and allowed nothing to escape her which could distress her visitors. If their conversation took a tone she disapproved, the mistress of the house went on with her work, and maintained a silence so profound that it was understood, and, as it were, heard like the irrepressible voice of conscience. Then, resuming the dialogue again by some easy and graceful transition, an interesting anecdote, or a philosophical reflection, she would simply give another turn to the current of talk, and thus maintain the rights of charity towards the absent without having been wanting in courtesy to the persons present. Instead of noisily driving slander away, she politely dismissed it, going pleasantly to the door with it and there bidding it a final adieu.

Her intellect, naturally of a high order, had been carefully developed; and she excelled in the art of conversation. She could joke and smile on occasion, but her disposition was more inclined to gravity, and she loved to draw the conversation from all other topics to the higher regions of religion and philosophy.

Many souls full of trouble, many minds overwhelmed with difficulties had recourse to her counsels. And in such cases she was a clever and delicate confidante, inexhaustible in charity and resource. The troubles

hidden beneath silk and gold were no less efficaciously succoured by her than the material miseries that showed themselves beneath their ragged coverings.

The little kingdom of Digoine was worthy of such a queen. M. de Musy was one of those men whom the Scriptures designate by a term as grand as it is brief. He was a "just man," under the eye of God.

Humbert, Victor, and Geneviève had been brought up in this noble school of christianity and virtue, and the succeeding generation, composed of Humbert's two children, Marie and Symphorien, were being formed by the light of the same examples.

There was a friend, almost an adopted son, who lived in the house and made one of the family. Providence had placed him beneath that favoured roof where he had gained the affection of all. His name was the Abbé Antoine.

IV.

Some years previously, when on a visit to Mgr. Decouvoux at Evreux, Victor de Musy, whose eyes were already failing him, had taken for his reader a boy to whom he became attached. He had him educated, and the young man, hearing within himself as he grew up, the voice of God, entered the Seminary of Saint Sulpice and received Holy Orders. He was the young Abbé of whom we speak, and he occupied the position of secretary to the paralytic priest.

All the care and solicitude of these noble hearts were centred on the poor invalid. Who shall tell what fervent prayers daily ascended for his recovery?

Although the faculty had pronounced in the most

positive manner on the incurable nature of the paralysis, they recalled to mind, sometimes, a far-away circumstance which roused in their hearts a faint glimmer of hope. At the beginning of Victor's illness (a long time ago now), Mlle. Geneviève had gone on a pilgrimage to Ars.

"Will my brother ever be cured?" she asked of the venerable Curé.

"Make a noveno to Sainte Philomène, and after I will answer you."

When the noveno was ended, Geneviève again consulted the Man of God.

"Will my brother ever be cured?"

"He will recover one day, but you must have patience."

"Will he be radically cured so as to have no remembrance of his illness?"

"Yes, he will be radically cured so as to forget his illness completely, but you must have patience! . . ."

And the Priest's thoughts seemed to penetrate through space into the mysterious depths of the unfathomable future.

So said Geneviève. . . . But, alas! was it quite sure that the good Curé of Ars was favoured with the gift of prophecy? Was it quite sure that Mlle. Geneviève's memory was absolutely to be trusted? Was it quite sure that the ardent desire of her heart had not attached to some vague words of hope, such as pity pours into the ear of the afflicted, an imaginary sense and meaning as of a certain promise and an assured vision of things to come?

Notwithstanding his infirmity, the Abbé de Musy found means to lead an active life. He had books of

religion or study read to him, or he dictated letters, or received visits from pious persons who applied to him for confession or guidance. Sometimes, even, when his voice was pretty strong, he would be carried to the pulpit and there preach the Word of life.

He might be seen, nearly every day, passing in the carriage which he often drove himself. Carried along by the obedient strength of the animal under his hand, he would almost feel for the moment an illusion, as it were, of returning life and vigour. In this way he went about the neighbourhood of Digoine wherever there was trouble to be relieved, courage to be raised, or some charitable work to be accomplished. He sat at the bedside of the sick, and remembering the teachings of the "Good Lady" at whose school he had received many a useful lesson, would advise the treatment to be followed. Ill himself, he gave health to others. But most often his prescription was: "Go and see my Mother".

He was very popular in those parts where everyone knew him, and where, with the exception of his stay at the Seminary, and the short visit to Evreux, his childhood and painful youth had been passed. Although he wore the priest's habit, he was looked upon above all, as the son of the Château of Digoine. In spite of his title of Abbé, and his cassock, the domestics and the country people hardly ever called him otherwise than "Monsieur Victor".

V.

At some little distance from Digoine stood another Burgundian mansion in which lived, or rather in which

was dying, an old relative of the family, M. de Montagu. He suffered from dropsy of the heart, a hopeless disease that was hurrying him to the grave. The paralytic priest went to see him frequently, and the two men so cruelly tried, happy in each other's society, forgot their sufferings in long and interesting conversations. It was then October, 1870.

But what did they find to say, and what was the constant subject of their talks? It is so consoling to tell one's troubles to a friend that perhaps they complained to each other of their afflictions. Not at all. They were christians, and their souls rose far above mere personal considerations. Neither the old man leaving the world, nor the young priest condemned to a life of impotence, had any thought for themselves. They talked of France and they talked of God: of France vanquished and God forgotten. In sounding the causes of our terrible defeat they rightly attributed them, not to the errors of military tactics, which were, however, most glaring, but rather to moral defection. "God," they would often say, "has been driven from our laws, our institutions, and our army. What can prevent the edifice from crumbling to ruin when the foundation is taken away."

"Can you believe, Victor," M. de Montagu would say, "that in the whole army of France, the eldest daughter of the Church, there is not, at the present time, a single chief who, before the battle, publicly asks for the alliance and help of the Almighty? Can you believe that not a single battalion has its colours marked with a christian sign? Ah! if France and her soldiers would but return to God, the Master who now

punishes us for our instruction would cease to chastise when once we had understood the lesson. There must be a reaction before we can act; we must turn back, before we can march forward; we must conquer ourselves, before we can conquer others."

"Alas! we are far from that!" cried the Abbé de Musy.

"Who knows? . . . They say that Cathelineau and Charette are busy raising a Catholic regiment. If it be so they shall have my son Stephen, and while the father dies here, praying for his country, the son shall give his life for it on the field of battle. It is certain that such a body of volunteers, formed in the name of God, and of His Christ, will be a terrific legion. Even if only a handful of men, the Lord will grant such great and special glory to their arms that the little cohort shall shine like a star in the darkened firmament of our national disasters. And Evidence will force History to the conclusion, that if but half the army had resembled that heroic and christian Legion, France would have triumphed and been saved."

While agreeing with M. de Montagu in these ideas, to which he was constantly recurring with the pertinacity peculiar to old age, the Abbé de Musy could not help wondering sometimes, whether the half-dogmatic, half-prophetic assertions of his relative were not rather the dreamy fancies of a brain weakened by age and sickness.

About this time the Prussians occupied a third of the territory. Almost the whole of our regular army was in captivity beyond the Rhine or imprisoned within the walls of Metz. Paris was besieged, and the German

troops had marched forward from day to day without once encountering a single check or having to give way one single step. Instead of the battalions of the Crimea and Italy we had poor inexperienced recruits directed by a government of adventurers. Such was the situation.

"Now," resumed M. de Montagu, one day as he ended the conversation, "you and I must do our duty. We must try to save our country, and turn the fortunes of our arms."

On hearing such an extraordinary proposal from a man almost at his last gasp, to a priest miserably paralysed and motionless in his invalid chair, the Abbé de Musy turned on his companion a surprised and anxious look.

"Alas! what can we do except pray?"

"Praying is fighting," replied the old gentleman gravely; "but we can do more. We can act."

"In what manner?"

"The Blessed Margaret-Mary wrote these words: *France will be saved by the Sacred Heart*. Well! Perhaps the time so foretold has now arrived, for France seems really threatened with destruction. Let us try, therefore, to put into the hands of our soldiers, and at the head of our defenders, a truly christian standard, with the venerated emblem of the Heart of Jesus Christ embroidered in its folds. We will do all we possibly can for that: of ourselves, by our friends, and by our connections: and we will send that banner to Paris, that it may float, in testimony of the Faith of France, on the walls of our besieged capital."

VI.

The Abbé de Musy was so struck by the idea that he immediately resolved to put it into execution. "It is you who have originated the thought," he said; "I will see that it is accomplished."

It has not been forgotten that he was unable to write himself, because of the state of his eyes, and it happened that the Abbé Antoine was away at the time. He dictated, therefore, to his sister Geneviève a pressing letter for the Superioress of the convent of the Visitation of Paray-le-Monial couched in these terms: "I beg you to have executed, by the nuns of your Community and at my expense, a banner of the Sacred Heart, on which is to be embroidered in letters of gold, as a remembrance of our Lord's promise to the Blessed Margaret-Mary, *Cœur de Jesus, sauvez la France!*" In a few days came the answer of the Reverend Mother, informing them that the banner had been sent off. "I have had the same idea for a long time," she wrote, "but I waited to know the will of God. Your request was to me as a voice from Heaven. We set to work immediately . . . The Banner is finished, and I have sent the case containing it to Mgr. Bouange, Archdeacon of Autun, begging him to forward it to you." No later than the next day, in fact, the prelate informed the masters of the Château of Digoine that the Bauner was in his possession.

VII.

It was no easy matter to introduce this new sort of Labarum into Paris, and hand it over to General Trochu.

The enemy surrounded the capital on every side, and intercepted all communication.

There lived at that time, at Tours, where the government of the National defence had taken refuge, an illustrious servant of God, M. Dupont.

Twenty years before, young Victor de Musy had recovered his voice before the Sacred Face of Our Lord, venerated in the house of that eminent christian, and was thus enabled to continue and terminate his ecclesiastical studies, and be received into Holy Orders. He saw, therefore, in M. Dupont, a valuable auxiliary, and to him he sent the Banner of the Sacred Heart.

"If possible," he wrote, "try and forward it to General Trochu; if not, entrust it to one of the chiefs of our heroic crusaders, for example, M. de Charette or M. de Cathelineau." It happened that, by a remarkable coincidence, General de Charette arrived at Tours at that very time, to effect the definitive organisation of his battalions; and he said to M. Dupont, who had gone to call upon him at the *Hôtel de Londres*: "My zouaves wear the emblem of the Sacred Heart on their breasts, and the only thing they want now is the Standard".

"Providence has sent it you," replied the servant of God. A few hours later, in M. Dupont's oratory and before the picture of the Sacred Face, the box containing the Banner of the Sacred Heart, that banner procured by the Abbé de Musy from the nuns of the Visitation, was opened in the presence of a few pious christians. M. de Charette received it as a gift from heaven and an assurance of glory.*

* The case containing the Banner was opened before the Sacred Face. The persons present were: General de Charette, M. Dupont,

This royal and patriotic standard was the rallying point of the volunteers of the West. Beneath its shade, or rather beneath its light, was fought the battle of Patay: the noblest deed of arms chronicled in our history during those disastrous times.

Three martyrs, M. de Verthamon, and MM. de Bouillé, father and son, perished successively in the brief interval of half-an-hour, while raising on high the Banner of Jesus and of France. And during that time, under the fire of a formidable artillery extending over fifteen hundred metres, the terrible Legion rushed on an enemy ten times their number, executing in modern times, and for the defence of their country, a charge as memorable as the famous resistance of the three hundred Spartans buried at Thermopylæ.

M. de Montagu had enrolled his son Stephen amongst the volunteers of France, and the young man had valiantly fought beneath the Catholic Standard procured by the initiative of his pious father and the prompt action of the Abbé de Musy. He did not, however, long survive those terrible struggles in which he had received incurable wounds. Two years of suffering and weakness brought him to the tomb, and when he felt his end approaching, and the moment near when

M. Ratel, Dr. de la Tremblaye and his son Martin de la Tremblaye, now a Benedictine in the Congregation of Solesmes; the Duchess of Fitz-James, the children of M. de Charette, and Mme. Emile Lafon.

Prayer was made before the Sacred Face for the safety of France: it was decided that the Banner should be entrusted to the R. F. Rey to be deposited in the tomb of Saint Martin until the morrow, and that these words should be embroidered on the back of it: "*Saint Martin protegez la France!*" The design for the embroidery was immediately made by the ladies present, and executed by the Carmelite nuns. (*Life of M. Dupont*, by the Abbé Janvier, Vol. II., p. 468.)

he should join his father,—called to God some little time before—he had himself taken to Lourdes to die there. The Sacred Heart had protected his life on the battle-field: the Immaculate Virgin blessed and consoled his dying hour. The body of Stephen de Montagu reposes at Lourdes; and from its resting-place in that sacred ground it will rise again, at the hour hidden from all—the hour of the resurrection of the dead.

VIII.

While the Standard of the Sacred Heart, given to the Christian Legion by the Abbé de Musy, was pursuing its glorious career, the long hours of national mourning were passed at Digoine in works of mercy and in prayer. They visited the sick and wounded who had come back to their homes; they came to the help of those whom the departure, or, alas! the death, of a son or a husband had left without resource; they provided for those whom the war had made orphans; they made lint or cut up bandages; in short, their charity assumed every form and discharged every office; and in the evening when the duties of the day were accomplished, they found strength and courage for the morrow's work by turning their eyes, their thoughts, and their conversation towards the things of heaven and the mercies of God. After the evening meal, all the inhabitants of the Château assembled for reading and prayer. The food that sustained their physical strength was served in different rooms, the dining-room or the servants' hall, according to the social distinctions ordained by an All-wise Providence; but the spiritual bread of the

soul was broken in common, and at the sound of the bell, masters and servants hastened to gather round the same lamp, to listen together to the words of Divine Truth that fell from the lips of the reader.

At that dreadful period of war, by the permission, or rather by the Will of God, the book chosen for the evening readings at the Château was the one bearing the title of *Notre Dame de Lourdes*; and the family, prepared by a long practice of evangelical virtues, to appreciate in a special manner whatever served to celebrate the Greatness and Mercy of the invisible Master of the World, were deeply touched by this history of the Apparitions and Miracles of Mary in our own times. They listened with clasped hands and tearful eyes to the recital of those divine events, recalled by the narrator under the auspices of Faith, Hope and Love.

"No, no," they would say, "God cannot have abandoned France, since on its soil, His Most Holy Mother has chosen to appear to men, and enrich them with her gifts. . . . The catastrophe that overwhelms us is a trial, not an irredeemable ruin, and the Vision of Lourdes, like the Star in the East, announces that sooner or later we shall be saved."

It was a strange circumstance that, though the book often treated of miraculous cures, neither the Abbé de Musy, nor any member of the family circle (except, perhaps, the Mother, in the secret of her heart), seemed to have the least idea of asking a similar grace for him. Indeed, the Abbé de Musy had been so often pronounced incurable by the doctors, that he was completely resigned to his fate, and had had no thought for many years of the possibility of being cured of his disease by any

means either natural or supernatural. He did not even wish it. The successive attacks of paralysis had appeared to him as the graduated stations of the steep path, always ascending, that the Imitation of Jesus Christ calls "The Royal road of the Cross".

"We have each our vocation," he would say; "mine is infirmity. I wanted to be a priest; God intended me to lead a life of suffering. May His Holy Name be praised!"

IX.

The war was over, and a great religious movement was manifest in Catholic France. Streams of Christians flowed from all parts towards Lourdes to supplicate the Virgin who had appeared to Bernadette; and the Rocks of Massabiella were, so to speak, bathed in the countless and incessant waves of prayer that broke at their base, always the same yet always varying, sublime in their unity and variety. The unbelieving world was lost in amazement at the sight of that perpetual and universal Procession of Peoples, rendered still more remarkable by the accomplishment of such miracles as had never been seen in any age.

By a counter movement easily understood, the immense tide setting in towards Lourdes revived the great idea and religious practice of Christian Pilgrimage, and turned public attention to other centres of prayer. Crowds of the Faithful reappeared at Rocamadour, Paray-le-Monial and Chartres.

Now, Paray-le-Monial is only three hours from Digoine, and the Abbé de Musy, whose devotion towards the Sacred Heart had in some sort increased

two-fold by all we have related about the Standard of Patay, resolved, all helpless as he was, to go and visit the celebrated place where, two hundred years before, the devotion so dear to him had originated. Accompanied by one of his servants he arrived at Paray at the end of May, 1873, intending to pass all the month of June there.

The first person he met on entering the humble and celebrated village, was a poor paralytic beggar, painfully dragging himself along by the help of crutches, with his feet encased in shapeless wrappings, and begging his bread. For five and twenty years the people of Paray-le-Monial had been familiar with the figure of the old man, whose head, superb and resigned, bronzed by the sun and the inclemencies of the seasons, shone, nevertheless, with the peculiar halo sometimes observed, and not without religious awe, in that mysterious presence known to all civilised nations by the august name of "the Poor".

The Abbé de Musy was particularly touched by the sight of an infirmity so exactly like his own, and being powerless to relieve the unfortunate man in his physical sufferings, he took pleasure in lightening the burden of his poverty. His left hand ignored what his right hand did, but it is probable that his alms were liberal and accompanied by gracious and pleasant words, such as flowed habitually from his heart and softened the sorrows of the afflicted. *Haud ignara malis, miseris succurrere disco.* The poor man blessed his benefactor, and his grateful eyes rested for an instant on his face with a strange intensity of expression. Whether the man was a stranger to the place, or whether he was

without family, it is impossible to say ; all that was known of him was his christian name. They called him Jean Marie.

Two days after, on the 2nd of June, five hundred pilgrims from Marseilles arrived at Paray. The Abbé de Musy, drawn along in his invalid chair, followed the processions, and took part in all the services. The preacher who announced the Word of God to the people, remarked, in the congregation, the paralytic priest listening attentively, and after Mass he hastened to him to give him some fraternal proof of sympathy. As he talked with him, hope rose in his heart, the hope that the afflicted priest would one day see, in this life, the end of his trials.

“You will be cured,” he said, with an accent of certainty which surprised himself. “Promise me two things, to pray for my parish, and to write and tell me when you recover.”

“The first promise is easy to keep,” replied the invalid ; “but the second depends on the Will of God.” And he shook his head with a smile of incredulity. This took place in the morning.

In the evening an extraordinary and unexpected event profoundly affected the pilgrims of Marseilles.

Paray-le-Monial is a place of prayer where the celestial effusions of spiritual life descend softly into the soul ; but it is only very exceptionally a land of miracles. The diversity of the gifts of God, spoken of by St. Paul in reference to persons, seems equally applicable to things. Just as in the sacraments, the water of Baptism, the sacred chrism of Confirmation, or the holy oils of Extreme Unction are so many channels of

different graces, so certain privileged sanctuaries and certain centres of devotion are more particularly distinguished by especial supernatural advantages and benefits. But, as it sometimes happens that at the instant of Baptism, the gifts of the Holy Spirit peculiar to Confirmation descend on the catechumen, in like manner, and at wide intervals, a few rare and miraculous cures will take place, contrary to the usual order of things, in Places of Pilgrimage that do not seem habitually to have been established by God for those particular graces.

The event which had excited the Pilgrims on the 2nd June, 1873, was precisely a miraculous cure—no other than that of old Jean Marie, the beggar, who, the evening before, when the Abbé de Musy had given him alms, had looked at him with such deep gratitude and such strange intensity. At a certain moment, and while all the congregation were kneeling in prayer, the paralytic man suddenly stood up, and walking up the church between the rows of the Faithful, went and deposited his crutches,—the crutches he had used for twenty-five years—on the tomb of the Blessed Margaret-Mary. The Abbé de Musy's happiness was great when he beheld the beneficent and almighty power of God, performing at Paray, on the indigent and infirm, the same miracles as it had accomplished in other times by the hands of Jesus on the banks of the lake of Genesareth. He congratulated Jean Marie without any thought of himself, for he had arrived, as we have already said, at that state of resignation when hope no longer exists. The joy he felt at the miraculous cure was full and without alloy.

"You will be walking and running now," said he gaily to Jean Marie—"you, who for twenty-five years have not been able to make so much as one step. But the legs that God has cured must not go bare-footed. I will give you your first pair of shoes."

It was one of his greatest daily pleasures, to converse with the poor man and hear him talk of God.

X.

If the Abbé de Musy had abandoned Hope, it happened that Hope had not abandoned him, but followed him closely up. The words of the priest from Marseilles were reiterated by other lips like an echo of the prophecy of the Curé of Ars. He had been at Paray-le-Monial about three weeks, when, on the 22nd of June, one of his relatives, the Chanoinesse de Pomey, accompanied by her brother, M. de Pomey arrived at the sanctuary of the Sacred-Heart.

The ancient title of Chanoinesse does not indicate, as many suppose, a Religious in the fullest acceptation of the word. It is generally conferred as an honorary distinction, and with the obligation of daily reciting a particular Office, on certain persons of society to whom the Church owes a debt of gratitude for some important good work accomplished. His Eminence Cardinal de Bonald had obtained it for Mme. de Pomey. Although there was a near relationship between this lady and the Abbé de Musy, they had, in the course of time, almost entirely lost sight of each other, as so frequently happens when members of the same family are separated by distance. They had not met for twenty years, and in all that time they had not exchanged one single letter.

When Mme. de Pomey and her brother heard that the Abbé de Musy was at Paray, they hastened to call on him. The lady looked at him for a moment with deep commiseration, as he sat, or rather lay, in his invalid chair; and then, appearing to respond to some secret inspiration, she said in a tone of reproach and surprise :

“What are you doing here, Cousin?”

“Why,” replied the paralytic priest, “I am doing what all the other pilgrims do, and what you are doing yourself: I pray, I begin and end novenos, I say the psalms and the rosary, I join my poor efforts to the fervour of these pious souls”——

“Well, you have no business here; you had better go at once!” she interrupted.

“What! you advise me to go away?” The astonished priest could hardly believe his ears.

“Certainly I do!” returned the Chanoinesse. “Your place is not here: *The Blessed Virgin intends to cure you at Lourdes.*”

“How do you know?” asked the invalid, ironically. “Are you initiated into the secrets of heaven?”

“No, but I am certain the Blessed Virgin means to cure you at Lourdes.”

“You pronounce your oracles with the accent of a Pythia of Delos or Delphi—she also was convinced, but mistaken,” resumed the Abbé de Musy, still incredulous.

“I am not mistaken. Go to Lourdes. The Blessed Virgin means to cure you there.”

“My dear cousin, let us be serious and practical. I feel your benevolent interest deeply; it proves how anxious you are to see me relieved of my sufferings.

But that is a most improbable eventuality. I have no right to miraculous favours which are reserved for those more worthy of them than I am. However, what is not only probable but certain is, that a long journey to one in my position is a terrible undertaking, full of fatigue and pain ; therefore, I must think twice before I set off to seek, at some hundreds of leagues of distance, a problematic cure that I neither hope nor ask for. But although it is difficult for me to move, I contrive every year, about August, to stay for a few weeks at some watering-place, such as Ems, Hambourg, la Bauche, or Divonne, and by that means I prevent my chronic infirmity becoming more intolerable by the addition of sharp and almost insupportable pains that invariably rack my frame during the winter if I have not taken the precaution of making a cure of mineral waters, which permits me to go through the cold weather pretty easily. Now, I cannot go to Lourdes and Divonne at the same time, and this year my brother is going to Divonne with me. Do you really think it wise or prudent to leave the certain for the uncertain, to give up the tried effects of the waters, that I may run after a miracle, and so seem to be trying to force the hand of Providence ?”

“Come, sister,” said M. de Pomey, intervening, “leave Victor alone ; do not tease him with your imaginary notions, but let him do as he thinks best.”

“Why cannot I implant something of my faith in your hearts !” resumed the Chauoinesse, more persistently than ever. “I tell you he must go to Lourdes !”

“And next winter,” continued the Abbé de Musy, “when, through having missed my season at the waters, I feel through my shoulders, my knees, my back, shooting

pains of such violence that they make me cry out, I shall say, 'I owe that to my cousin de Pomey'."

"I willingly accept the responsibility; but you may be sure that the Blessed Virgin means to cure you at Lourdes."

There are innumerable proverbs on the obstinate tenacity of a woman's will, and they are all true. The Abbé de Musy was vanquished.

"Well, so be it!" said he at last. "I resign myself to my fate. But I cannot start before the return of the Abbé Antoine, who will have to be my companion and sick-nurse."

They looked at the almanack and calculated the dates.

"You must start the 6th of August," said Mme. de Pomey, "and you will arrive at Lourdes for the Feast of the Assumption."

A few days after, the Abbé de Musy heard some one knock at the door. He called out, "Come in," and Jean Marie entered.

"Sir," said the beggar, gravely, "you will be cured."

"How do you know?"

"The night preceding my cure, I had a dream in which everything was as clear to me as the sun at mid-day. I felt that it was not an ordinary dream, but a forewarning from heaven. In my dream, I saw myself cured, . . . and on the morrow, as you know, I stood up on my feet, and deposited my crutches on the tomb of the Blessed Margaret-Mary."

"That is very extraordinary!" said the Abbé de Musy, with the sort of shiver that nearly always passes over one at the contact of the Supernatural.

"Well," returned the beggar, "last night I had the same sort of dream about you. I saw you, with the same clearness, cured and walking about like me, full of health and strength."

This dream, coming immediately on the words of the priest from Marseilles and the urgent persuasion of the Chanoinesse de Pomey, struck the Abbé de Musy forcibly. The prediction of the Curé of Ars, which up to that time had been lost and half-effaced in the far-off mists of memory, now came vividly back to his recollection.

XI.

When the Abbé de Musy returned to Digoine towards the beginning of July, he informed his family of the promise he had made to go to Lourdes. The news of that supreme appeal to Mary was received with a strange mingling of hope and alarm. If, on the one hand, they were all christians and knew that nothing is impossible to God; on the other hand, such a long journey to a sick man in the state of the Abbé de Musy, was a trial fraught with suffering and danger. It is written, "Trust in the Lord"; but it is also written, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord". The perplexity was great and the struggle painful between the theological virtue of Faith and the cardinal virtue of Prudence. Their hearts oscillated from one sentiment to another according to their different dispositions, and the impressions of the passing hour, but all took refuge from their anxieties in the universal remedy of prayer.

They wrote to different religious Communities and to their friends, to ask them to join in a noveno that was

to commence on the 8th of August, the day fixed by the Abbé de Musy for his arrival in the town of Mary. From the depths of her Convent at Nevers, Bernadette, to whom they applied, promised to unite her intentions to those of the inhabitants of Digoine.

The Abbé de Musy, however, since his return from Paray, had felt his confidence gradually diminishing, and although he determined, as a gentleman, to keep his word, he had come by degrees to entertain no sort of hope of being cured.

"It is useless for me to try to persuade myself," he said; "I doubt!"

"I tremble," cried the father, alarmed at his son's undertaking such a painful and adventurous journey.

"We hope!" responded Mlle. Geneviève, M. Humbert, and the young people.

"I believe," repeated the mother invariably. And thus weeks passed away and the hour of departure arrived. In the invalid priest's room the Abbé Antoine was packing and the Abbé de Musy talking.

"I think it absolutely impossible, my good friend, that the Blessed Virgin of Lourdes should restore me to health! . . . My vocation is to suffer. . . . And yet, if Mary willed it and gave me strength enough to go up again to the Altar in her sanctuary. . . . Oh! then I should celebrate that Mass of my resurrection as I celebrated my first Mass thirteen years ago, in the amice of the Curé of Ars. At all risks we will take that amice. . . . But what am I saying? It is impossible! Nothing but a waking dream!"

XII.

On the 6th of August, the Abbé be Musy left the Château de Digoine for Lourdes, taking with him the Abbé Antoine as his only travelling companion.

"Follow me with your prayers, it is all I ask!" he said to his family.

It was a lovely summer night when he started, the weather was calm and warm, and the moon shone softly over the fields and forests. At midnight the carriage stopped at the railway station.

"We are at Chagny," said the Abbé Antoine.

If the future could have been revealed to them, or if they had had a presentiment at that moment, the name of Chagny would have interested them strangely, and they would have looked with attentive eyes on the aspect of the town and the outline of the old church spire. But the future was covered as with a veil, and Chagny was nothing to them but the first painful stage of their pilgrimage through France; for there began the difficulties and sufferings that attended the sick man each time he had to be moved from the platform to the train, or the train to the platform.

Two porters and the Abbé Antoine carried him carefully on to the platform to wait the arrival of the train, and the railway officials coming and going, carrying luggage or giving and receiving orders, were moved with pity at sight of him.

"Has he been long in this state?" asked one of them.

"He has been nearly blind for twenty years, and paralysed for eleven years."

“ And where is he going like that ? ”

“ To Lourdes.”

“ What for ? ”

“ To be cured.”

Most of these worthy men were but novices in religious matters, and it will be no calumny to say that in manner and thought they differed widely from the inhabitants of the Château of Digoine. Their lives were passed amongst the amazing prodigies accomplished by modern science ; they only understood, alas ! what was palpable, and were little inclined to believe in miracles from heaven. Thus, the expression of confident hope that would have appeared sublime to pious souls, seemed, to the station-master and his men, somewhat innocent and foolish, and they looked at each other as much as to say :—“ If one of these priests is weak in his body, they must be both of them uncommonly weak in their minds”. However, their opinions in no way hindered their solicitude for the invalid, nor prevented their taking the utmost care in carrying him to the train, that the movement might not increase his sufferings. If they were far from the faith of the Centurion, they had, at least, the charity of the Good Samaritan, and without doubt the hand of the Heavenly Father blessed their active zeal and their kindly commiseration.

The paralysed and helpless state of the Abbé de Musy, the strange object of his journey, the distinction of his person and the long time he had to wait at the station, had attracted the attention, not only of the railway officials, but also of the other travellers, inhabitants of Chagny, who were going to take the night train.

The recollection of the infirm priest going to seek in a distant part of the 'country a cure that the Faculty had pronounced impossible, occupied their thoughts and fixed itself in their minds.

At every change of line, the Abbé de Musy had to be carried from one train to the other at the cost of great pain, and after a few minutes of waiting, but not, alas! of resting, the train resumed its course and steamed rapidly towards the town of the Queen of Heaven, cruelly shaking his aching limbs in its progress.

They slept at Cette and arrived at Lourdes the second day after their departure from Digoine, on the Friday, 8th of August, in the evening.

Rooms had already been secured on the first floor of a house in the street of the Grotto, and the paralytic priest, exhausted with fatigue, was carried to them by the Abbé Antoine and the driver of the fly in which they had come from the station.

The ground-floor of the house where the two pilgrims stayed was occupied by a shop of objects of piety. They noticed a magnificent statue of Our Lady of Lourdes.

"If I am cured," said the Abbé de Musy, "this statue, the first that has met my eyes here, shall be the one I take back to Digoine." . . .

XIII.

The following morning he was taken to the Crypt, to be present at the Mass that the Abbé Antoine was to celebrate for him. The infirm, the paralytic, all those afflicted by any visible infirmity, the pariahs of health,

often feel a sort of shame in being seen thus disinherited of a heavenly gift that nearly everyone possesses. They dread the eye of man, and shrink instinctively from even benevolent curiosity, most especially in the hour of fervent prayer and profound meditation. The pity of strangers, even of the best and most pious, seems but superficial and troublesome when the soul is in silent and intimate union with the Almighty Consoler. Something of this feeling induced the Abbé de Musy to have his invalid chair rolled into a dark corner behind a pillar to the left of the Altar. He would have liked, were it possible, to be seen by none but the Virgin Mary. But it happened that behind this pillar another cripple had taken refuge, a poor child of the working classes about fifteen years old, with a most angelic countenance. A strongly-built workman had just laid him, with the tender precaution of paternal solicitude, on two chairs. His face was very pale and etherealised with long suffering, his eyes were large and soft, and his hands were fervently folded together, indeed, his whole person expressed the interior beauty of the pure and innocent soul that seemed ready to unfold its wings and soar to the Heavenly Country.

The Abbé's dim eyes were attracted by the boy as by a light, and his heart was moved with sympathetic pity.

"What is your name?" he asked him.

"My name is Pierre."

"Well, little Pierre, I will pray for you, and do you pray for me."

"With all my heart, *Monsieur l'Abbé.*" . . .

At this moment Mass began. After the consecration, the officiating priest carried the Blessed Host to the

Abbé de Musy lying motionless in his chair. As for little Pierre, the strong workman raised him in his arms, and carrying him, extended across his chest, advanced to the Holy Table where the priest gave Holy Communion to the father and the child.

After Mass the Abbé de Musy was taken down to the Grotto, where he remained a very long time. On leaving, his friend asked him, "What was passing in your mind just now when you were communing with the Blessed Virgin".

"I was praying to her. I invoked her for all I love, for poor little Pierre whom we have just left, and who is, at this moment, bathing in the miraculous water. I begged for grace to be a better man. . . . Then I remembered the special object of my pilgrimage, and I said to our Mother: 'Cure me if it is for a greater good. I do not even ask you to relieve me of all my infirmities, but only to enable me to stand on my legs so as to be able to celebrate Holy Mass.' I must own that I was frightened at the daring of my prayer, so I added: 'Holy Mother, if you do not cure me, I am really so happy with my cross, that I shall thank you quite as much as if you did'."

He then went and bathed in the piscina, but nothing extraordinary took place.

XIV.

On returning to Lourdes, he said to the Abbé Antoine, "I must think of confessing".

"Very well. I will go and fetch one of the Fathers from the Grotto."

"No, no!" replied the paralytic priest, "I want to confess to the Curé of Lourdes, the Abbé Peyramale. He is a priest chosen of the Blessed Virgin. Try and find him, and ask him to be good enough to come and hear my confession."

The Abbé Antoine set off, but though he searched for him the whole afternoon, he could not find him. The next morning, Sunday, he went to the sacristy of the parish church, and seeing a priest of severe aspect about to go up to the Altar, he addressed him respectfully.

"Excuse me, sir, you are the Curé of Lourdes, I think?"

"I have not that honour," replied the priest.

"I beg pardon!" resumed the Abbé, "but from the description of M. Lasserre, I thought . . ."

"Ah! if only I was like him in other things besides personal resemblance!" cried the priest, smiling at the mistake. "Though he sometimes appears rough outside he is all gentleness within, like Saint Paul. *Fortis et suavis*. But here he is."

The Abbé Peyramale at that instant opened the door of the sacristy.

"*Monsieur le Curé*, a crippled priest in the street of the Grotto, wishes to confess to you."

"Tell him I will come as soon as I have said Mass."

About an hour after, the Abbé de Musy saw him enter his room. The Curé of the Apparitions saluted the invalid with a fraternal embrace.

"Courage!" said he; "if the Blessed Virgin takes up your cause, you will soon be cured."

Then he sat down beside the Abbé de Musy, and in the secret of his chamber received his confession. And when, in the name of God, he had pronounced the words : *Ego te absolvo ab omnibus peccatis tuis*, etc., he rose and walked silently up and down the room, leaving his penitent to meditation and prayer. He was, doubtless, praying himself also, and imploring her whose apostle he was on earth, to grant their petitions and vouchsafe them the cure of that long affliction. Then the two priests had a conversation, in which the Abbé de Musy related his history. The secret and inviolable confession was succeeded by an intimate confidence, in the course of which the thoughts and feelings instilled by the Curé Peyramale into the heart of the invalid might be resumed by the one word : "Hope!"

It often happens, that when we suddenly find ourselves in the presence of some illustrious man whom we have known only by a portrait, sketched in outline in the pages of a book, we feel a sensation of disappointment. The contrary was the case with the Abbé de Musy. He found the Curé of Lourdes just as he had fancied him to be. Indeed the two priests understood each other from the first : they spoke the same language, they belonged to the same country, they were both sons of Mary.

After the interview, the Abbé Antoine heard the double echo of their impressions.

"What a noble and priestly heart!" cried the Curé Peyramale on leaving the room ; "his mother must be a saint."

"You are not mistaken," replied the young friend of the house, who, better than anyone else, was acquainted

with the virtues of the mistress of the Château of Digoine.

“How glad I am,” said, on his side, the Abbé de Musy, “that you brought me the Chosen Servant of Our Lady of Lourdes! I feel greater confidence since I have seen him, and, as it were, a promise of a Miracle. He is indeed the Priest of the Blessed Virgin, and his word seems, in some sort, an engagement for the Queen of Heaven to come to our help.”

XV.

The pilgrims who hastened to Lourdes for the Feast of the Assumption, soon remarked in their midst the paralysed priest, still young, visible at all hours in his invalid chair, either on the road to the Grotto—we might call it with truth the Sacred Road—or in the Crypt, or under the vaulted rocks of Massabiella. All felt a deep interest in him, and a profound pity and sympathy for this labourer of the Lord, who had been powerless for so many years, and unable to work in his Master’s vineyard.

Christians who had come to invoke for themselves the intervention of the Blessed Virgin, prayed for the unknown priest as well. What spiritual alms are thus given at Lourdes, of which we shall only know the secret when the thick shadows that, on earth, veil the mysteries of life, shall have disappeared, to give place to the revelations of eternal light!

Two days after his first visit, the Curé of Lourdes came to see the Abbé de Musy again.

“What!” said he, “the Blessed Virgin has not cured

you yet? I shall quarrel with her," he added, smiling at his threat, and speaking with a familiarity of expression that seemed almost excessive, but that holy men of God have employed, from the times of Job and David, down to the times of Vincent Ferrier and the Curé of Ars.

His cheerfulness, his confidence, his absolute faith, and the promise of his prayers, brought renewed hope to the hearts of the sick man and his companion.

"We have an advocate with Mary," they said to each other. He was not the only one, however. Every morning, when the Abbé de Musy went to Mass in the Crypt, he found little Pierre there before him, and during the day he met him continually at the Piscina, or in the winding paths leading to the Basilica, or at the Grotto. These two christians, equally afflicted and equally innocent, sympathised with and consoled each other. The conversation of the priest delighted the child; the sight of sufferings so angelically borne edified and encouraged the priest. Thus their hearts were drawn together by a tender friendship, and each prayed for the other more fervently than for himself. The one who arrived first at the Piscina kept the place for his friend. Little Pierre did not leave it till the Abbé Antoine knocked at the door, and the Abbé de Musy had got into the habit of remaining till he heard the soft voice of little Pierre, outside, asking for admittance. What a strange intimacy had arisen between these two suffering fellow-creatures, who, a week ago, were ignorant of each other's existence, but who, coming to the sacred Grotto from the two opposite extremes of France, had become, beneath the regard of Our Lady of Lourdes, like old

friends and brothers of the same blood. *Cor unum et anima una !*

The one, however, was a patrician of the higher classes ; the father of the other was a poor working shoemaker of the neighbourhood of Pau. The former was a learned priest in the prime of life ; the latter a child ignorant of all that men teach. One had the terrible responsibility of great riches ; the other, besides the trial of disease, bent under the cruel weight of indigence. But contrasts like these, which engender division in societies without God, harmonise in the superior unity of love amongst christians. And thus a sublime friendship was formed before the Altar and in the presence of the image of our divine Mother, between these two, or rather these three persons, for the father of little Pierre, the village shoemaker, Pierre Rochou, shared the noble sentiments of his son, and was worthy of such a child.

XVI.

On the 14th of August, a paralytic woman was suddenly cured at the Grotto. Meeting the Abbé Antoine a short time after, she encouraged him cordially.

“ You must have confidence ! ” she said ; “ to-day it is my turn, to-morrow, I hope, it will be your friend’s. The Blessed Virgin will hear and answer your prayers for her glorious Feast of the Assumption.”

The following day was, effectively, the 15th of August, the date when the Church celebrates the triumphant entry of the Mother of Jesus Christ into the kingdom of her Son. Uncertainty and doubt gradually disappeared from the mind of the infirm priest before the

rays of ever-increasing hope that rose like the dawn in his heart, and attained by degrees to the full light of day. That radiant daylight of hope of which the Saviour of the world has said: "*Si potes credere, omnia possibilia sunt credenti*": If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." Whether it was illusion or reality, it seemed to him that the atmosphere of the miracle enveloped him, and the captive of so many long years of impotent suffering, already pronounced the word "Deliverance!" as Columbus cried "Land! land!" even before, with his bodily eyes, he had perceived the continent beyond the limitless horizon.

"To-morrow! to-morrow!" murmured the priest with trembling lips, "may it please Our Lady of Lourdes to cure little Pierre, and heal me also if such be her sovereign will."

The two priests passed a sleepless night from the night of the 14th to the morning of the 15th of August, and, as may be supposed, they passed it in prayer. The stars trembled in the silent immensity of heaven, and here and there, beneath the arches of cloistered chapels, where the nightly office assembled the monks and the religious; in solitary rooms where Christian piety watched the sick and dying; on the couches of the just where sleeplessness reigned; in thousands of different places of the sleeping earth, numberless hearts, illuminated like suns by the ardent light of *Oraison*, rejoiced the eyes of the angels. "*Ecce nunc benedicite Dominum omnes servi Domini. . . . In noctibus extollite manus vestras in sancta et benedicite Dominum*: Praise the Lord, ye children; praise ye the name of the Lord. . . . From the rising of the sun unto the going

down of the same, the name of the Lord is worthy of praise."

Thus the rapid hours flew by, and when the joyful peals of silvery bells rang out simultaneously from the Parish Church and the Basilica, announcing the morning of the great Feast, one of the priests said to the other: "How quickly the night has gone!"

When we think and talk of the things of eternity, we no longer feel the weight or the march of time: it is annihilated by the immensity of our subject.

And now was heard the jingling of the harness bells of two horses rapidly trotting down the street, and the carriage that had been ordered the previous night stopped at the door.

"We must start!" said the Abbé de Musy. "The Curé of Lourdes is celebrating Mass, and his *Memento* is for us. I wonder what this day will bring!"

And if, at that same hour, across hills and valleys, mountains and rivers, tufted forests and boundless plains, the eye could have penetrated into the silent chapel of a Château in the neighbourhood of Autun, it would have perceived, by the light of the rising sun, a woman with white hair, a mother, prostrate before God, trembling with hope and expectation, and murmuring also: "What will this day bring!"

XVII.

The hearts and thoughts of the inhabitants of Digoine were turned towards Lourdes. How fervently they followed the noveno of prayers! with what avidity they read the daily letters of the Abbé Antoine, giving them news of the dear absent one!

If Faith were banished from every other earthly refuge, it would still be found in the heart of a mother. Madame de Musy had no doubts.

"Yes," she had said to Geneviève, from the first day, with a tone of certainty that admitted no objection, "yes, my daughter, he will be miraculously cured, and we shall see it with our eyes."

And with every moment that passed, her boundless faith increased, admirable indeed in principle, but as terrifying in reality as the joyous balancing of a child playing over a precipice. . . . What would happen if the branch broke or the cord gave way? Still her faith had assumed such proportions, that in the intimacy of family conversation she had come to speak of her son's cure as of an accomplished fact. And yet, there was in her mind a strange mixture of happiness and alarm. It seemed to her that the cure so ardently desired would be the signal of a fatal separation, the entrance of her son into a new world where she would not be able to follow him. She thought of the mysterious words of our Lord, newly risen from the tomb, to Magdalen when she drew near: "*Noli me tangere!* Touch me not!" That was not like the old times!

"What a marvellous thing!" she would often say; "it will be like a resurrection for him. . . . I shall tremble to speak to him, and I shall not dare to treat him as I used to."

"But, mother, that would pain him." . . .

"Only think of the transformation we shall find in him. God will have created him afresh. He will have renewed his bones and moulded his flesh, as He did

when He made Adam of the dust of the earth. Like Moses when he came back from Mount Horeb, his brow will reflect the glory of the Holy of Holies. . . . I shall be afraid to look at him ; only to think of it makes my knees bend under me."

Thus was her radiant hope sometimes dimmed by a shade of melancholy, as the pure surface of a summer sky is now and then crossed by a light, fleecy cloud.

"He will be the son of the Blessed Virgin," she would say dreamily ; "but will he still be mine as well ?"

The light clouds, however, melted quickly away in the tranquil serenity of the atmosphere, and naught else troubled the firmament of her happiness.

On the 14th of August, the vigil of the Assumption, she said : "And he is really going to be cured ! What joy ! My poor boy, he has well-earned such a reward ! Such virtue ! Such patience ! Not one complaint in twenty-two years !"

"Oh, mother !" cried Geneviève in vague terror, "do not count too much upon it. Suppose he came back from Lourdes without having been cured !"

Madame de Musy pressed her daughter's arm, and in a low, broken voice, and with an accent that moved her profoundly, replied :—

"I am *sure* he will be cured ! To-morrow ! To-morrow will be the sixth day. . . . I shall receive a telegram from Lourdes. He will be cured to-morrow morning."

"And her eyes," relates Mlle. Geneviève, "had an expression of celestial rapture. I was fully persuaded that the telegram she had announced, and to which she

was looking forward with such positive certainty, would find her quite prepared."

Alas! Providence, in its impenetrable designs, disposed events quite otherwise to what was expected! That night, the eve of the Feast, an old friend of the family, the Abbé Bourbonne, Chaplain of the Visitation at Paris, arrived at the Château of Digoine.

After an agitated night, void of sleep, and filled with prayer, Madame de Musy rose before daybreak.

"It is the Assumption!" she thought, "the triumph of a Mother, of the Mother of mothers, the Mother of Jesus Christ. . . . After having held in her arms on Calvary the lifeless body of her Son, this is the day on which she possessed Him anew and for ever, in all the plenitude of His life both human and divine, reigning over heaven and earth. And that, after first seeing Him rise from the dead here, in this world! O God of goodness, is it really true that, all unworthy as I am, I am going to experience something of a similar felicity!"

Thus did her thoughts rise to heaven. Certain words surprised on her lips the preceding day, raised a suspicion that she had offered her life in exchange for her son's. Touching and redoubtable reversion!

When she went down to the chapel, she found the Abbé Bourbonne there, come like herself, to pray.

She confessed before the communion of the day, for she felt herself on the verge of a crushing happiness, and wished to be fortified by a renewal of strength from heaven, that she might the better bear up against her great earthly joy. Then she went and knocked at the doors of her husband's, her son's, her daughter's, and

her grand-children's rooms; she desired that from the first dawn of the Feast they might invoke the Heavenly Father for the beloved absent one, present, nevertheless, in all their hearts.

“Come to prayers! Come to prayers!”

She called them to prayers for the special work she desired to see accomplished, as one is called to work for the ordinary labours of life.

The Abbé Bourbonne went up into the pulpit of the parish church, and asked the congregation to pray for the sick priest, the father of the poor, who had gone to seek his cure in the region of Miracles. The peasants knelt with tears in their eyes, and recited: “Our Father,” and “Hail Mary,” in favour of him who was called in all the country-side, “the good Monsieur Victor,” and whom some among them, alarmed by his long, painful journey, feared they would never see again.

Madame de Musy was at her window every minute, looking along the road that leads to Epinac, where, about ten kilometres from the Château, the telegraph office was situated. But the hours went by and nothing arrived.

Let us go back to the Abbé de Musy.

Notwithstanding the early hour, the upper part of the church was filled with the Faithful, come to share in the celebration of the great Feast of the Assumption. The two priests went to the Crypt where there were but few persons, amongst whom, however, poor little Pierre and his father occupied their usual places.

The high altar, dedicated to the Virgin, was disengaged. So after rolling the invalid chair with its helpless occupant, by the side of little Pierre, the Abbé

Antoine, as he had done every day, but with a firmer and more ardent hope, celebrated Holy Mass for the intentions of his benefactor and friend. At the communion he carried to him the body of the Lord, and little Pierre, laid in his father's arms, was presented before the Holy Table and also received the Bread of Life.

Mass was ended. Notwithstanding so many fervent invocations, and so many promising presentiments, nothing of what had been asked for and expected had taken place. Neither of the invalids was cured nor even relieved. The Queen of Heaven seemed deaf to their supplications.

The Abbé Antoine tried to be resigned, and reflected with great reason that, of its proper nature, a miracle is an exceptional event even at Lourdes, and that God and His Most Holy Mother are not less merciful in refusing it than in according it, from time to time, to the prayers of the faithful. His afflicted heart found in this Christian philosophy the consolation he really needed.

As to the two companions of misfortune whom faith had brought together in that blessed place, they had communicated and left far behind them all personal preoccupations. Completely absorbed and ravished by the reception of the Divine Guest, they had almost forgotten their previous hopes, and the bitter feeling of disappointment had no place in their hearts. They heard another Mass of thanksgiving, and when it was ended, the father of little Pierre took his child in his arms to go and bathe him in the Piscina.

"Pierre," said the Abbé de Musy, "do not wait for me this morning at the Piscina. I shall stay for the

third Mass which is just about to begin." And he again absorbed himself in his meditations.

XVIII.

Lourdes, like Rome, is the rendezvous of the whole universe. There one makes new acquaintances and finds old friends. There, in the supernatural order, is manifested the Miracle; in the natural order of things, the Unforeseen is permanent.

By a singular juncture, the priest who celebrated that third Mass was the former professor of M. de Musy, at the seminary of St. Sulpice—the Abbé Dominique Sire, who had arrived at Lourdes either the same morning or the evening before.

"On that day," he told us, "I did not offer the Holy Sacrifice for myself nor for any person that I had chosen. Without naming anyone, I offered it for the maternal intentions of the Blessed Virgin, imploring the Queen of Heaven to apply the merit of it to whomsoever she pleased."

The Abbé Antoine served that Mass.

M. de Musy had not recognised, in the priest who had just mounted the steps of the sanctuary, his beloved master of former times. Seated in his invalid chair, he meditated on the different texts that fell on his ear, in the clear, distinct voice of the officiating priest. He listened attentively to the reading of the Gospel, of which the last words were those once uttered by the Lord to His zealous hostess, and destined in succeeding ages to calm all the anxieties of this fleeting life.

"Martha! Martha! Sollicita es et turbaris erga plurima. Porro unum est necessarium: Maria optimam

partem elegit quæ non auferetur ab ea. Martha! Martha! thou art careful and troubled about many things. But one thing is necessary: Mary hath chosen the best part which shall not be taken away from her.*

"What!" he thought, "I have Mary's part, and I grieve not to have Martha's? I am a Christian, consecrated to God; I can enjoy, every day, the privilege of communion with the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, and yet I can wish for anything more!"

At the altar there was silence. The priest was reading the secret prayers which ran thus: "*Subveniat, Domine, plebi tuæ Dei genitricis oratio: quæ etsi pro conditione carnis migrasse, cognoscimus, in cælesti gloria apud te pro nobis intercedere sentiamus.*"† "May the prayer of the Mother of God assist Thy people, O Lord, *that we may experience her intercession for us in heavenly glory*, whom we know to have passed out of this life to satisfy the condition of our mortality. Amen."

Such was the invocation addressed at this moment to Heaven by the Catholic priest, in the name of the Church. And the august sacrifice drew on towards the incomprehensible marvel of the Consecration.

Nothing remarkable seemed to have been accomplished amongst the devout congregation praying beneath the vaulted roof of the Crypt. And yet, at the cry for help, raised towards the Virgin Mary, "*that we may*," said the holy liturgy, "*experience her intercession for us in heavenly glory*"—at this cry for help to the Mother of Jesus Christ, a voice which was not that of the deacon or the people, had responded, "*Amen!* so be it!"

* *Roman Missal*, Gospel of the Mass for the Assumption.

† Secret of the Mass of the Assumption.

A voice unheard by human ear but which, when it speaks, fills the infinity of heaven.

XIX.

The pilgrim of Digoine was seated behind the column that hid him from observation, and reposed in spirit in the bosom of the Almighty Father.

The solemn words, "*Sursum corda !*" pronounced aloud, recalled him to consciousness.

What words can describe his feelings when, on recovering himself, he felt within his astonished and awe-stricken soul an absolute conviction that henceforth he could rise, stand upright, and walk. He had the tranquil assurance that his long-lost sight was restored, and that all the ills with which he had been afflicted for so many years, had disappeared at once and for ever.

It was not that he had experienced any shock, or emotion, or inward flutter : nothing of that kind had disturbed him. He suddenly found himself in perfect health. The miraculous grace had penetrated his whole being without his perceiving it, exactly as light penetrates into the room of a sleeping man. He falls asleep in darkness, and wakes in the broad light of day. Softly effacing the dark shades of night, the celestial rays have flooded his house without disturbing his slumbers. Thus the omnipotent and sovereign hand of Mary had removed all disease from the priest's blind eyes and useless feet, and had shed upon him the luminous effluvia of life, without disturbing his meditations or troubling his prayers. He was seized by a trembling emotion, a sort of terror ; he could not believe in such a complete change, such a radical transformation accomplished in him so

suddenly and without his co-operation. On the one hand, he was tempted to rise; on the other, he resisted the inclination; he did not dare to move, he did not dare to prove the truth; he did not dare to convince himself by any exterior act or movement, of the reality of the miracle. His heart believed, but his mind doubted, and doubt, that it might be all the more invincible, assumed the form of humility.

“Yes, oh! yes, the Blessed Virgin could cure me if she liked, but I am not worthy.” He struggled against the secret impulsion which prompted him to move and rise. But to the inward feeling of his cure was added an outward and mysterious physical force, that seemed to seize his body and urge it forward; he struggled still, like Jacob with the angel. “Perhaps I am deceiving myself, perhaps it is all illusion, and I may fall down again if I attempt to rise! I should be making a false miracle, and would not that be a sort of confusion for the Blessed Virgin? A little later when I am alone.” . . . The force, however, that persuaded him became more and more urgent, without ceasing to be maternal. Resistance was impossible; the vanquished priest rose from his chair and fell on his knees like all the rest of the Faithful.

At the same instant the bell of the Elevation was rung.

To cure the minister of the Lord, the Blessed Virgin had chosen that moment of supreme mystery when Heaven descends to earth. While the Divine Son followed by the adoration of His Legions of Angels came down invisible on the altar, the Virgin Mary taking the paralytic priest by the hand, relieved him of his infirmity, healed him, and presented him to Christ the Redeemer.

XX.

When the Abbé Antoine left the altar with the officiating priest to return to the sacristy, he perceived the Abbé de Musy on his knees, motionless, with his head in his hands. The sight gave him a violent shock, but so much are the best of us disposed to doubt, that anxiety got the better of Faith, and his only fear was that his friend had been making some tremendous effort, and would sink and fall. Impelled by his apprehensions, he hurried to his side ready to help him at the first sign of weakness; but some time elapsed before M. de Musy moved, and when he did, he rose up without aid.

His agitated and trembling friend precipitately pushed forward the invalid chair that the paralytic might sit down. But the paralytic refused by a motion of the hand, and said: "The Blessed Virgin has cured me"; then with a firm, calm step he turned to leave the church.

The Abbé Antoine was stricken speechless, and *his* step was neither firm nor calm. Never in his life had he known his benefactor otherwise than infirm. The perspiration streamed down his face as he followed M. de Musy, pushing before him, in his bewilderment, the henceforth useless invalid chair, as if he thought that the sight before him was an illusion which would suddenly vanish. The coachman seated on the box of his carriage was waiting for them; when he perceived the Abbé Antoine he got down to help him carry his companion, but surprised at the empty chair, he said:

"Where is your invalid?"

"I am here," replied the priest of majestic and imposing stature, who arrived at the carriage door at the same time as the Abbé Antoine. "The Blessed Virgin has cured me, and the carriage is not wanted; we will walk to the Grotto."

The astounded coachman turned his eyes towards the person who spoke, and recognised in him, as he stood full of health, life, and vigour, the helpless and paralysed priest of a little while ago. The words died away on his lips, he felt as if he were dreaming, and looked at the Abbé Antoine in complete amazement. Then he took the invalid chair and put it in the carriage.

At the church-door the two priests fell into each other's arms and wept.

"*Mon père, mon père!* you are cured!" . . .

"I believe I am, *mon fils*," replied the Abbé de Musy.

These were the only words exchanged. There are certain emotions of the heart which can only be expressed from man to man by tears, and from man to God by prayer. So they went down the road praying and reciting the Rosary: *Ave Maria, gratia plena.*

XXI.

They reached the Grotto about nine o'clock. The crowd thronged around the sacred rocks, old men, young men, women, believers of all ages, in the silence of individual prayer and the stillness of meditation. Some on their knees, others drinking at the miraculous spring, or saying the rosary, or reading their prayer-book, or standing in groups on the banks of the Gave talking in low voices. A little behind the rest a tall man with

marked features, whose commanding height raised him above all the bent heads, contemplated, with the melancholy smile of mournful incredulity, that multitude kneeling before vacuum and adoring nothing.

Such was the spectacle which greeted the arrival of our friends. They went through the crowd heedless of the passage of the two priests, and entered the Grotto where M. de Musy knelt on one of the chairs usually to be found there.

But suddenly, to the calm silence and devout prayer of these human masses, succeeds a whisper ever increasing, a growing murmur, a profound rumour, an agitated clamour. In one of the ecclesiastics who have just entered the Grotto, some amongst the crowd think they have recognised the infirm priest whom they have remarked for the last week, sitting or rather lying in his invalid chair, and being pushed along by his friend. Everyone gets up to look and see. The eager crowd rushes forward towards the Grotto; and the Brother who guards it promptly shuts and double-locks the iron gate. A cross-fire of exclamations is heard.

“Is it he?”

“Is he cured?”

“What was the matter with him?”

“Where is he?”

“It is a miracle!”

“Is it possible!”

“Hail, Mary!”

“It is some other priest!”

But suddenly, as if at a sovereign command, all the tumult was appeased and succeeded by a breathless silence. Behind the gate of the Grotto, the restored

man had risen, and turning his noble head, all illuminated with the reflection of the miracle, towards the multitude, he made them a sign that he wished to speak.

"Yes, my dear brethren, it is I. I whom, ever since my arrival, you have seen here with my body paralysed and my sight gone. I am a priest of the diocese of Autun. I have not been able to read for twenty years, and for eleven years I have been totally paralysed and unable to ascend to the altar to celebrate the only Mass that I knew by heart. Our Lady of Lourdes has restored my health and my sight! . . . Ah! may this great miracle improve the good and convert the unbelieving. Help me to thank God and obtain of Him grace to be a good priest."

Instantly the chant of the *Magnificat* broke forth, and all the people glorified the Lord.

After hearing the account of the miracle they wished to prove it.

"Walk about! walk about!" cried the crowd, and the paralytic began walking.

"Read! read!"

They placed before his eyes a book in very small print, and he, who for twenty years had not even been able to distinguish the big characters of the Missal, now read fluently and without the least hesitation.

"Your signature! Your signature! . . . on this book . . . this engraving . . . this paper!" . . .

And hundreds of hands passing through the railings, presented to the Abbé de Musy, prayer-books, *Imitations*, little religious pictures, visiting cards, etc. He traced numberless signatures with a pencil and in a

firm clear hand, on the numberless leaves that poured in on every side.

XXII.

All of a sudden a man, a workman, breathless with running, was seen forcing his way through the crowd. His rough, honest face was working with the most magnificent emotion, the gate of the Grotto opened before him, and he threw himself, weeping tears of joy, into the arms of the Abbé de Musy. It was the father of little Pierre.

"And little Pierre? Is he cured also?" asked the priest in a voice full of anxiety.

"No, *Monsieur l'Abbé*, such has not yet been the will of God."

The priest made a movement of mournful commiseration. He was almost ready to accuse Heaven for not acting differently.

"And I!" said he, almost sadly, "the Blessed Virgin has granted me this immense grace!"

The workman understood M. de Musy's secret feeling by the tone of his voice.

"Ah! *Monsieur l'Abbé*," he replied, "what the Blessed Virgin does she does well! And, indeed, I feel nothing but gladness."

In truth, there was no sign of pain or regret in his features, nothing of that envy that so often gnaws the heart at the sight of another's felicity; no murmuring against the inequality of our destiny in this world; and yet for three years running, the poor father had come every year to Lourdes to pray for the recovery of his son.

“And where is little Pierre?”

“He is over yonder, in a little corner away from the crowd. When we heard the *Magnificat* he trembled for joy. ‘Father,’ he said, ‘it is our friend who is cured; run and see him, run and see him!’ and I ran as hard as I could. Now I shall go back to him to confirm the news.”

“No! no! I will go myself!”

They left the Grotto together. The crowd fell back, its mass broke up and formed a living hedge for the passage of the man miraculously cured.

There was a carriage waiting on the borders of the crowd, and in it an invalid chair. The Abbé Antoine made a sign to the coachman, and immediately the chair passed from hand to hand over the heads of the multitude, to be deposited in the Grotto in memory of the miraculous event. The Abbé de Musy crossed the triumphant *ex-voto* on his way, and his eyes that had wept so much, were wet with fresh tears at the sight of the visible remembrance of his bygone sufferings—sufferings that by some strange moral illusion seemed already so far away.

Before the Piscina he found the angelic little Pierre stretched in the rustic little wooden carriage that served him for an invalid chair. He went up to him and pressed him in his arms. “Ah! my dear child!” he cried, “how I wish Our Lady of Lourdes had granted you the same grace as me!”

But little Pierre raised to the Abbé’s face his large limpid eyes brilliant with celestial joy, and answered as his father had done:

“The Blessed Virgin knows what is best for me.

There are so many boys of my age who offend God and blaspheme against Him. If I had my health, perhaps I should do the same. Now I do not offend Him, I love Him with all my heart, I receive Him in Holy Communion and I am happy. I would much rather keep my illness and not offend God, than have my health if I were to take advantage of it and become wicked. What the Blessed Virgin does, she does well !”

And once more holding out to the Abbé de Musy his innocent arms, as if to console him for the shade of sadness that hung on his brow, he tenderly embraced him.

That child was scarcely fifteen—and he was the son of a poor village shoemaker ! . . .

Is it possible, at such sights, O Almighty God, not to turn towards You our grateful souls, and not to repeat, prostrate before You, the words addressed to You by our Lord Jesus Christ :—“ O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, I thank Thee because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones. Yea, Father, for so hath it seemed good in Thy sight.”

XXIII.

The Abbé de Musy now bent his steps towards the house of the missionaries, whither he went to give an account of his cure. The crowd, never tired of seeing him, continued to follow wherever he went. He climbed the hill rapidly and without any limping, or fatigue, and as soon as he had made his declaration to the guardians of the sanctuary, he turned towards his companion,

thinking only of those who were so far from him in person, but so near to him in heart.

“Make haste to the telegraph office! What joy for my mother, my good father, and all of them. And go yourself and tell the news to the Curé of Lourdes. My first visit will be for him.”

After partaking of some refreshments that were offered to him, the Abbé de Musy returned again to the chapel.

It was about one o'clock. All the masses were finished, and everyone was gone back into the town for the mid-day meal, so that the nave was perfectly empty, for which the Abbé de Musy thanked God. He had exhausted his strength in the scenes of the morning, and felt the necessity of renewing it; he had belonged to the crowd, and now he wanted to collect himself. And here, in the very centre of so much life and movement, so much outside agitation, he had, to his great joy, found a profound retreat, an absolute silence, a refreshing peace, that special and peculiar peace that dwells only at the foot of the altar and beneath the vaulted roof of the church. He was alone, alone with God. He could kneel down without a thousand eyes watching his every movement; he could weep without everyone seeing his tears; he could in the intimate union of prayer, pour forth his soul before the Lord, and before the Blessed Virgin, without being disturbed every instant by the innocent selfishness of indiscreet piety whispering in his ear: “Pray for me”.

He went through the silent arches and knelt close to the sanctuary; and there, before the Tabernacle, all his life of suffering, suddenly transformed into a life of

health and strength, came back to his memory. The prediction of the Curé of Ars, his conversations with M. de Montagu, the gift of the Standard of the Sacred Heart, the pilgrimage to Paray, the presentiment of the priest of Marseilles, the almost violent persistence of Mme. de Pomey, the beggar's dream, and the words of the Curé of Lourdes, seemed to him like so many luminous landmarks on the road, that had led him to his miraculous cure. And on each one of these landmarks was engraved the name of the Lord.

The thought of his mother was foremost in his mind; he attributed to the sanctity of that virtuous woman the prodigious grace he had just received. As when, speaking of the tears shed by Saint Monica, Saint Ambrose cried: "The son of so many tears cannot perish"; so he in his heart exclaimed: "The son of so many prayers was bound to be cured!" He felt that the will of God had been to keep him infirm for such a number of years, that he might remain near her and be strengthened more and more in the virtues of the priest by the admirable and incessant example of her great soul, all inflamed with the love of Jesus Christ.

"Three times she has given me life," he thought: "once my natural life, by my birth, accomplished in pain and suffering, then the sacerdotal life of my vocation, of which she planted the germs in my soul, and now the miraculous life of my cure, which she has obtained for me by her fervent prayers. O Mother! my Mother!"
 . . . And this cry of gratitude rising from his heart, included in one and the same filial sentiment, the earthly mother who had borne him, and the universal

Mother who pours forth her benefits from the heights of Heaven.

What should he do with this new life? . . . He had been ordained priest for thirteen years, and he had never yet been able to exercise any active ministry. Should he be a Religious, a Missionary, a Monk, or a parish Priest? . . . How great need he had of light from on high! . . . Then contemplating the Tabernacle, as the Hebrews on leaving the desert must have looked at the Promised Land, "It is there," he said to himself, "that I will ask the graces I so much require, when, to-morrow, after so long an interruption, I offer once more the Sacred Victim. To-morrow is Saturday, the day dedicated to the Blessed Virgin,—and it is the 16th of August, the feast of my mother's patron Saint."

The afternoon was advancing, however, and the chapel began to fill. The Abbé de Musy returned to Lourdes, where the news of the miracle was already noised abroad. As he reached the town, vespers were being celebrated at the parish church, and the Curé Peyramale was relating to his people the great event of the morning.

Who shall tell with what fervour the faithful servant of Our Lady of Lourdes pressed the Abbé de Musy in his arms, when, immediately after the service, the latter came to see him.

"Well, I do not think you will quarrel with the Blessed Virgin now?" cried the Abbé Antoine, gaily.

"I was already reconciled!" replied the deep but joyful voice of the Priest of the Apparitions.

"To-morrow I shall celebrate my second First Mass," said the Abbé de Musy.

“And I will be your chorister-boy!” cried the Curé of Lourdes. But an unforeseen obstacle presented itself.

Eleven years had gone by since the Abbé de Musy had last consecrated the Body of the Lord, and when he tried, with the Missal in his hand, to see how far his memory would serve him, he perceived that he had forgotten the strict letter and minute detail of the ceremonies of the Holy Sacrifice, so that he was obliged to put off the celebration of Mass for a day, that he might learn the liturgy again in the meanwhile.

The whole of Saturday was passed in the necessary study, under the direction of the Abbé Antoine. The disciple taught the master.

Towards evening a visitor, a tall man with marked features, presented himself. The Abbé de Musy remembered having noticed him the evening before, at the Grotto, where he had remarked his energetic head and his expression of mournful incredulity.

“*Monsieur l'Abbé,*” said the stranger with emotion, “you are my benefactor. Oh! how much I thank you.”

“And for what, sir? I do not know you.”

“It is to you I owe my return to the faith. My name is Emile Pellegrin; I live at Luc in the department of Var. I was in a state of total unbelief, when I arrived here a few days ago, in company with my sister. I saw you before your cure, drawn about in your invalid chair; I saw you after it, and I heard you speak at the Grotto. I have no more to say. The hand that nothing can resist has passed over me, I have been to confession, a thing that has not happened to me since my childhood—that is for forty years—and I am

come to ask you as a favour, to administer Holy Communion to me to-morrow."

The minister of God opened his arms to the traveller who had come from so far, on his return to his true Home. He understood then that his cure was the beginning of an apostleship, and that God meant to use him as His instrument in bringing back to the light of truth many souls groping in darkness, many hearts that had lost their way.

"Our Lady of Lourdes be praised!" cried he. "The greatest grace has been for you! Certainly I will administer Holy Communion to you, and *there will be joy in heaven over one sinner that doth penance, more than upon ninety-nine just who need not penance.*"

XXIV.

Early the following morning, Sunday, the Curé Peyramale knocked at the door.

"I am come to fetch you," he said. "I will serve your Mass first; then I will celebrate Mass myself, and after it will be the Abbé Antoine's turn. Three priests and three Masses will not be too many to return thanks to God and Our Lady of Lourdes for such a signal miracle!"

"I am ready," replied the Abbé de Musy.

"Let us start then. You need not take an amice," added the Curé of Lourdes, as he saw the Abbé de Musy take from the table a square of folded linen. "There are always plenty at the sacristy of the chapel."

"I have special reasons for wishing to use this one," replied the miraculously cured priest.

That day was the eleventh Sunday after Pentecost.

The Abbé de Musy, arrayed in the sacred vestments, crossed the nave and reached the choir. On his right hand was the Curé Peyramale, whom he called his advocate with the Blessed Virgin, and on his left the Abbé Antoine. A compact crowd filled the Crypt; the Abbé Sire, M. Pellegrin, little Pierre and his father, were all present on this great occasion.

The celebrant pronounced the first words of the Holy Sacrifice: "*Introibo ad altare Dei*. I will go unto the altar of God." "*Ad Deum qui lætificat juventutem meam*," responded, at the foot of the altar, the deep voice of the Curé Peyramale.

Those who heard the immortal language of the Church, could not refrain from applying the mysterious meanings of the different readings and prayers of the day, to the extraordinary circumstances in which they found themselves at the moment.

In the midst of that congregation, whose hearts joined with his in thanksgiving, the celebrant read: "God in his holy place; God *who maketh men of one mind* to dwell in a house".* . . .

The first Oraison expressed with literal exactness the feelings of gratitude that overflowed the heart of the Abbé de Musy: "*Omnipotens sempiterne Deus qui abundantia pietatis tuæ et merita supplicum excedis et vota; effunde super nos misericordiam tuam ut dimittas, etc.*": † Almighty, everlasting God, who, in the abundance of Thy loving kindness, dost exceed both the merits and

* Mass of the 11th Sunday after Pentecost, introit.

† Mass of the 11th Sunday after Pentecost, 1st collect.

desires of Thy suppliants ; pour down upon us Thy mercy that Thou mayest forgive," etc. . . .

But when he had reached these words, the Abbé de Musy could go no further ; he stopped suddenly, his voice sank ; his eyes no longer distinguished the characters of the Missal. . . . The Curé of Lourdes, secretly moved, but in appearance calm and impassible as a bronze statue, immediately ascended the steps of the altar, and standing beside the celebrant lent him the help of his eyes, and pronounced one by one the words of the liturgy which the Abbé de Musy repeated or rather stammered after him. The collects, the epistle and the gradual, were said in the same way. A mortal suspense filled every heart ! A subdued agitation prevailed in the devout assembly. Could it be possible that the cure was not maintained ? Had that visible and marvellous grace suddenly disappeared ? Was the miracle nothing but a mirage ?

Everyone knows that after the *Credo*, the officiating priest turns to the Faithful to salute them in the name of the Lord. "*Dominus Vobiscum.*" So having finished saying the creed, the Abbé de Musy turned towards the congregation ; all eyes beheld his face working with unspeakable emotion. His trembling lips, scarcely able to articulate, and his eyes suffused with sacred tears, expressed the inward joy that filled his soul. At sight of him, a thrill of sublime intuition passed through the crowd, they comprehended then that his eyes had been blinded by tears of joy, and his voice extinguished by excess of happiness. The prisoner, set free, almost sank beneath the weight of his bliss. After that, the Holy Sacrifice was continued in gladness of heart. "I

will extol Thee, O Lord, for Thou hast upheld me ;
 . . . O Lord, I have cried to Thee and Thou hast
 healed me," said the Abbé de Musy, pronouncing the
 words of the Offertory.*

The communion began. The first to receive the Bread of Life was the converted unbeliever ; after M. Pellegrin, came the lady miraculously cured on the 14th of August ; after her, the angelic little Pierre, and then the numerous Christians who filled the Crypt. The distribution of the communion lasted half-an-hour, the Abbé Antoine all the time following the officiating priest, to wipe his streaming brow and his face bathed in tears.

When he returned to the sacristy, the Abbé de Musy was covered with perspiration, and in many places his clothes were wet through, so powerful had been the impression made on him by the celebration of his "second *first Mass*". He took off the sacerdotal ornaments, and helped the Curé Peyramale, who was going to say Mass at the same altar, to put them on. The amice that had encircled his neck was quite wet ; but the three priests, profoundly absorbed in spiritual things, paid no attention to that trifling material detail. Although there were other amices clean and white ready for use, that was the one the Curé of Lourdes put on his shoulders. The Abbé de Musy remarked it to him afterwards.

"I did not notice that I gave you my amice all wet with perspiration."

"What matter ! I was as much at ease in it as if it

* *Exaltabo te, Domine, quoniam suscepisti me. . . . Domine clamavi ad te et sanasti me.*—Mass of 11th Sunday after Pentecost. Offertory.

had been my own; one would think it had been made for me."

"Oh!" resumed the Abbé de Musy, "I only half regret my carelessness. That old piece of worn-out linen is a relic; it was the amice of the Curé of Ars." And to himself he thought that the Curé of Lourdes was the right man to wear it; but he refrained from making the reflection aloud, for he knew it would provoke some stormy reply from a nature, at the same time, humble and abrupt. The Curé Peyramale never took compliments in good part, and looked askance on those who addressed them to him.

XXV.

While all these events were being accomplished at Lourdes, what had been passing at Digoine for the last two days?

As we have already related, Madame de Musy, with a confidence we have called terrifying, expected, for the Feast of the Assumption, a telegram informing her of the cure of her son. The morning, however, went by, without bringing the despatch; the postman came with a letter from the Abbé Antoine, written two days previously, speaking only of the general appearance of the pilgrimage, and the state, still unchanged, of the invalid. The long hours of the afternoon struck, one after the other; still no news. The least noise or the sound of a footfall, made Madame de Musy start up with joyful expectation; not, alas! to be realised. Nothing! still nothing! Nevertheless, her peaceful faith remained long undisturbed, and her hope steady and unfailing.

The sun disappeared from the horizon, evening came on, as unproductive as the day had been, and the shades of night enveloped the Château of Digoine.

The premature closing of a telegraph office on the 15th of August, at a station between Lourdes and Epinac, had been the cause of the delay of the telegram—sent off, as we know, immediately after the miracle. And some unknown incident, a wrong address, or the breaking of a wire, hindered it unfortunately still more, and for a time absolutely beyond all reasonable limits.

Nox nocet. Sleeplessness is fruitful in depressing thoughts; the mind, like nature itself, assumes sombre shadows in the silent darkness, when the eyes are unclosed by slumber. On the morrow, when Madame de Musy left her room, everyone remarked the shade of profound melancholy that hung over her. . . . About eleven o'clock, the postman arrived as usual. The Abbé Antoine's daily letter was dated from the Thursday, vigil of the Assumption, and contained but a few unimportant lines. That day, the 16th of August, was Madame de Musy's saint's day. There is sometimes, in families, a special and traditional saint, under whose patronage everyone is placed at their birth, no matter what their sex. Such was the case in the family of Costa de Beauregard. Madame de Musy, who came of that house, was called Armance Geneviève Marie *Roch*. And though the christian name by which she was known in her family was "Armance," her *fête* was always celebrated on the day of Saint Roch.

On this particular occasion, the Archpriest of Couches-les-Mines and his curate were invited to dinner at mid-day. The mother had intended—we have already said

with what unshaken faith—to honour Victor's miraculous cure at the same time. Alas! her hopes were fallen. What had seemed to her, up to that time, to be as certain as the word of God, was now only possible, and in many ways appeared improbable. Cruel doubt and painful uncertainty had replaced the calm assurance of her faith, as to the final result of her ceaseless prayer. She had been deceived by the inward voice she had thought infallible, and she knew not on what to fix her fallen hopes. Still she believed, and her hands nervously clasped at every instant, testified to the struggle she made to maintain that confiding faith to which the Lord has promised the recompense of miracles. But her efforts were fruitless: vainly she strove to recover what she had so fully possessed the day before. Yesterday she was on dry land, to-day she is struggling in the desolate anguish of a limitless sea, and she whispers the name of Jesus in the terror of her agony. "My God! my God! why hast Thou forsaken me?"

But accustomed to forget herself in her care for others, she made it a duty to entertain her guests, and remained in the drawing-room after dinner with M. de Musy, Humbert and Geneviève, in conversation with the Archpriest of Couches and his curate. Symphorien had gone out somewhere in the neighbourhood, Marie was walking in the park, and the Abbé Bourbonne was reading his Breviary in one of the avenues.

XXVI.

About three o'clock, Mlle. Geneviève went out and joined the Abbé Bourbonne, to talk with him about her

brother and the Grotto of Lourdes, whither her thoughts were ever returning, for she dared not touch on the subject in the drawing-room before her mother.

At the foot of the flight of steps that led into the avenue she perceived a woman, a stranger to Digoine, coming up the walk towards her. She went to meet her and inquire what she wanted. She had been sent by the telegraph office, and held a telegram in her hand. Geneviève's blood rushed to her heart, she felt everything turning around her. She looked at the telegram. It came from Lourdes, and was addressed to *Madame de Musy*. . . . She went back to the Château and on her way met the Abbé Bourbonne.

"This is, perhaps, to announce my brother's cure," said she trembling. "It is the telegram my mother has been expecting for the last two days! I must hasten in and take it to her."

The Abbé Bourbonne looked at the address, raised his eyes to heaven, and turned away to reflect and collect his thoughts.

Mlle. Geneviève mounted the steps; she trembled so that she could hardly walk. A terrible fear, the reaction of hope had come upon her, and she dreaded some bad news. "Up to the present," she thought, "no telegram has come to Digoine but to announce a death." Her step slackened; she was strongly tempted to break the seal, but respect for her mother stayed her hand. "If it be really the miracle, no one must know it before she does. . . . Dear mother! she has truly deserved that. But will she be able to bear the shock?" . . . The most conflicting feelings were at work in her mind. At last she opened the hall door, then the drawing-

room door, and mastering her voice by a great effort she said, "Mother, you are wanted".

It was the hour at which those of the poor who had not been able to come in the morning, were in the habit of presenting themselves at the house of the "Good Lady," who, like the Curé of Lourdes, had her "customers". Madame de Musy thought it was one of her usual visitors.

"I will come directly," she replied, not wishing to interrupt the conversation of one of her guests, and she was some few minutes before she appeared. During that time, Geneviève waited feverishly in the hall. She hid the blue envelope of the telegram in her sleeve, fearing the shock for her mother if she saw it too suddenly.

At last the drawing-room door opened and Madame de Musy came out. She was surprised to find her daughter alone in the hall.

"Who is it wants me? I see no one."

"It is a woman. . . . She is in the kitchen."

Saying which, Geneviève drew forward an easy chair. "Sit down a moment, mother." . . .

"I, sit down!" repeated Madame de Musy in astonishment, wondering what made her daughter look and speak so strangely.

"Do, I beg you, dear mother!" she insisted imploringly.

"Why, what is the matter? What is the matter?" repeated Mme. de Musy, yielding to her daughter's solicitations and seating herself.

"Here is a telegram for you from Lourdes."

The mother seized it and held it convulsively pressed

in her hands, but without breaking the seal. Breathless and almost speechless, she contrived, however, to pronounce the words :

“It is Victor’s cure ! O merciful God ! What a grace ! He is cured ! He is cured !”

“Mother ! mother !” cried Geneviève terrified, “do, I implore you, open the telegram !”

Her trembling fingers could hardly tear open the envelope. She looked at it, she read it, and by an extraordinary phenomenon her voice recovered its firmness.

“*Lourdes, 15th August.* Praise to Mary ! M. de Musy was cured this morning at eight o’clock.—Antoine.”

She rose and returned to the drawing-room, holding the telegram in her hand. Her face was incomparably majestic, her regard was transfigured ; the most sublime chords of human nature, adoration, gratitude, maternal love, vibrated in the sound of her voice.

“Victor is cured ! It is the deliverance of my son ! It is the triumph of the Mother of God !!!”

The father, speechless with happiness, made a gesture of thanksgiving to the Almighty, and silent tears flowed down the old man’s cheeks. Frantic exclamations of rapture escaped from Humbert. The two priests were transfixed with amazement, and Marie, who had so often waited on and cheered her uncle, came running in, dancing for joy, as, in old times, David danced before the ark. The Abbé Bourbonne came in also, and all hearts were united as one heart in gratitude and thanksgiving.

Madame de Musy had remained standing, but suddenly her face changed ; she became deadly white.

“Mother, what is the matter ?”

"Oh! it is nothing, it is the joy," she said; "my heart beats with rapture. . . . Oh! how fast it beats. . . . What a grace! After twenty years of suffering! A whole life of infirmity. All those incurable evils to disappear at a word from Our Lady of Lourdes! Let us thank God and the Blessed Virgin! On our knees!"

M. Humbert began the *Magnificat*.

Madame de Musy desired to communicate the news to her servants herself. She kissed old Claudine, the maids and the humbler servants, and then went to the gardener's cottage, crying:

"My son is cured!"

Her heart so overflowed with joy, that she was bound to tell it, and talk of it, and spread it abroad.

In the evening the chapel at Digoine could not contain the crowd that flocked to the Château. The beneficent mercy of God was already known in all the countryside. The Abbé Bourbonne lent the grand voice of the Church to the universal gratitude:—*Te Deum laudamus! Te Dominum confitemur!*

On leaving the chapel, Madame de Musy was again seized with the sudden paleness she had had a few hours previously in the drawing-room, and again she repeated:

"Oh! it is nothing! It is the joy . . . my heart beats with happiness. . . . It is nothing!"

It is nothing! Ah! poor mother! Joy is something, and it can, alas! like sorrow, shatter our fragile nature. The heart that beats too fast, may one day break beneath the sudden weight of felicity.

Madame de Musy had experienced the first attack of

a disease which was, not in any immediate way, but after the lapse of a certain time, to open to her the gates of Heaven.

The doctor, M. Bidault, was sent for. "Alas!" said he, "she must pass the rest of her days in her arm-chair or her bed."

"The day of the Assumption would have found me prepared," said Madame de Musy several times. "I was expecting the telegram. But the following day I had no longer any hope of it."

She would not allow her son Victor to be informed of the effect his cure had had on her.

"No," she said, "I will not have anything trouble his happiness and thanksgiving, at the feet of Our Lady of Lourdes."

XXVII.

The Abbé de Musy and his faithful Achates left the privileged town on Thursday the 21st of August, after saying goodbye to the Curé Peyramale, M. Pellegrin, the Abbé Sire, and little Pierre, the friends that they had, in some sort, received from the hands of Our Lady of Lourdes herself. And though he was intensely anxious to return to the Château of Digoine and its beloved inhabitants, it was not without torrents of tears that the restored paralytic tore himself from his last prayer, before the Rocks of Massabiella.

He had chosen for the family chapel, as he said he would, the magnificent statue of Our Lady of Lourdes, which had met his eyes on his first painful arrival in the house of the street of the Grotto.

“Our Lady of Lourdes,” said he, “shall henceforth be the Patroness of our house!”

The two pilgrims started at six o'clock in the morning, and travelled all day without stopping, till they came to Cette, where they slept. We shall not stop to relate the amazement of the railway officials or the people at the hotel, when they recognised in the strong and vigorous priest, the helpless and infirm invalid whom they had seen carried about with so much difficulty a fortnight before; nor the emotion of the Christian congregation of St. Joseph of Cette, when, during Mass, it got abroad among the people that the officiating priest was the man miraculously cured by the Blessed Virgin; nor the trouble he had to escape from the town and withdraw himself from an ovation. Like him, we decline to loiter over the incidents of the journey; like him we hasten to return to Digoine.

XXVIII.

On the Friday, M. Humbert de Musy, though more unwell than usual, and only able to move with the greatest difficulty, left Digoine in the evening and reached the station of Chagny a long time before the train was due. It seemed to him that he was about to wake up from some extraordinary dream, for notwithstanding the letters from Lourdes and the force of moral evidence, he felt himself, despite his efforts, a prey to the incredulity of the Apostle Thomas, rejecting all testimony.

“To see him walk! To see him walk! Oh! no, it is impossible! . . . Most likely when he sees me he

will muster a little strength. . . . Oh ! if without his knowledge I could conceal myself somewhere and watch his movements ! ”

Acting on this thought he resolved to remain in the station-master's office, and from some dark corner where he could see without being seen, to await the arrival of the travellers.

At last he heard the distant rolling of the iron wheels on the rails, the bell rang, the porters rushed out on to the platform, the flaming lights of the engine came rushing up in the darkness, and the train stopped before the brilliantly lighted station.

M. Humbert's resolution was not proof against his feverish impatience. With a step, rapid in spite of his sufferings, he hurried on to the platform, but already, from the other end of the train, his brother's keen eyes had recognised him, and descending quickly from the carriage, the Abbé de Musy ran up and clasped him in his arms.

“ Humbert ! ”

“ Victor ! ”

And they embraced each other with tears of joy.

“ What joy ! Oh ! what joy to see you cured ! ”

“ Oh ! my poor Humbert, how I wish it had been you ! ”

“ No ! no ! certainly not ! God has well chosen, dear brother ! . . . Your life is a thousand times more valuable than mine ! Think of the good you will be able to do ! ”

“ And father ? mother ? my sister ? your children ? How I long to see them all again. We will drive as fast as we can. ”

"But, my dear Victor," said Humbert, "we could not reach Digoine before one in the morning."

"Well, what does that matter?"

"Well, the fact is, mother is not very well."

The Abbé de Musy started.

"Do not be uneasy," resumed Humbert hastily, "she is a little upset by the news of your cure, and last night she slept badly. All she wants is a night of quiet and repose—which she could not have if it were disturbed by our arrival, so we shall sleep here, at an hotel, and start to-morrow morning at daybreak."

The Abbé de Musy was completely reassured by these words.

XXIX.

The next morning, as they drove through Couches-les-Mines, Doctor Bidault, who lived in the little town, and was waiting on the road to see the travellers pass, came up to congratulate his former patient, and asked for a seat in the carriage, wishing, he said, to share in the happiness of the family. . . . The reader has guessed that the old doctor was apprehensive of the effect this second overwhelming joy might have on Madame de Musy, and that he was anxious to be present in case of an emergency.

The carriage rolled rapidly along the road to Digoine. It was well-known in all the country about, and to-day the country people looked out for it with especial interest, for they knew the restored paralytic would be in it, he whom they called the "Good Monsieur Victor!" When it passed them as they worked in their fields or their vineyards, and they caught sight of the radiant face of

the priest, they threw up their arms and cried exultingly, "Long live Monsieur Victor!"

The Abbé de Musy thanked them with his hand and his smile, and cried, "Yes, my friends, it is I; and I am perfectly cured!"

However, the carriage did not stop; all understood how anxious the travellers were to reach home, and besides, M. Humbert had given orders that, under no circumstances were they to pull up, for fear of some imprudent word being dropped about Madame de Musy's state. Besides, he wished his brother to have the full enjoyment of this universal gladness.

The farmers and farm-servants had come out to meet the carriage. Many of them, not quite sure when it would arrive, had waited on the road all night, and when at last it passed them, they knelt down in the dust, while the Abbé de Musy, agreeable to their desire, blessed them with humble simplicity.

Suddenly the severe profile of the Château stood out from the horizon; the dark walls, the high towers, the secular oaks. The Abbé de Musy and the faithful companion of his pilgrimage burst into tears. "There is Digoine!" They had come back to it at last, after their miraculous journey.

There was a long silence. At a sign from M. Humbert, the coachman had slackened the speed of his horses, and as they drew nearer, the façade of the Château became more distinct.

"What is the matter?" asked the Abbé de Musy eagerly, "the shutters of mother's room are closed!" . . .

Humbert took his hand.

"Dear Victor, mother is unwell, as I told you yester-

day, but rather more so than I let you think. She keeps her bed, and the shutters are shut that she may hear no outside noises." Then he told his brother the whole truth.

The son's recovery had been the cause of the mother's illness! In the depths of her anguish the mother had been struck by joy as by a sword; and now in the full exuberance of the purest joy, the son felt the keen edge of sorrow penetrate his soul. O, mystery of Providence! . . .

XXX.

When they reached the park gates, the Abbé de Musy stopped the carriage and got out; he wished to walk with uncovered head, up the shady avenue that his ancestors had planted, and by which he once more returned after such marvellous events, to the privileged domestic temple called Home. But he had already been seen by those who were expecting him, and he had taken but a few steps, when his old father, his sister, his nephew, and his niece, came running out to meet him.

Do you remember, reader, the touching scene, sketched by our Lord in the divine parable of the Prodigal Son? The father, who, no doubt, often looked out on the road by which the ungrateful young man had disappeared, recognised his son in the distance, in the miserable wretch who approached with bent head, and tattered garments; and running to meet him, he pressed him to his heart, and fell on his neck, and embraced him with tears of joy. In like manner, the old Count de Musy clasped Victor to his breast, but with feelings that had no blending of bitterness, and he also cried with tears of joy, "My

son was lost, and is found ; he was dead, and is come to life again ". But there was no need to go and fetch the best robe ! the Virgin Mary herself had taken care to clothe him in an incomparable robe, the robe of health and strength ; the robe of Life. The feet, once powerless, were now active, the eyes once in darkness, shone with life and light. Instead of going away in sin and returning in humiliation, like the prodigal, Victor had departed in suffering, heroically borne, in humble patience and supplication, and he had come back in glorious triumph.

The father leant on his son's arm—the group had become a procession. Thrilling with inexpressible emotion, the conqueror crossed the threshold of the paternal Château, and a hedge of servants thronged his passage ; all hearts turned towards him, but none dared to draw near or speak, or even kiss the hem of his garments. A religious respect restrains all outbursts ; and the son, healed of his infirmities, turned his steps towards his mother's room.

XXXI.

At the sound of his feet the door opened.

Madame de Musy lay on her bed of pain. She was pale as death, but her face shone with celestial bliss as she held out her arms to her son, who hastened to her, and kissed her with his whole soul on his lips, kneeling before the maternal couch as before the altar of sacrifice where the body of a saint reposes.

" My son," she said, in a voice of most harmonious sweetness ; " my son, you were already a child of Mary,

to-day you are so more than ever. She will be your protectress, your force and your consolation. . . . Ah," she added, smiling, "I shall not be jealous of such a Mother as she is!"

The Abbé de Musy had risen and held his mother's hand in his. She was never tired of looking at him and contemplating in all the splendour of the new life he had brought back from Lourdes, her child of predilection. As for him, his heart sank within him at the sight of his mother, and he asked himself with a feeling of vague terror, what was to be the price of the unparalleled grace he had received from heaven. She guessed his thoughts.

"Do not be afraid, Victor! Your recovery will give me life."

A subdued daylight filtered through the closed shutters and shed its rays over this incomparable scene, worthy to be immortalised by art, and well calculated to tempt the genius of some great painter. Around the sick mother and the miraculously healed son, the most varied physiognomies were assembled. The father, bent with age, and leaning on the foot of the bed, considered those two beloved ones, and shared at the same time and in all its sweetness, the sick mother's delight, and in all its bitterness, the mortal anguish of the restored priest. At his side, Humbert de Musy, with pain-racked body and radiant face, poured forth his soul in secret thanksgiving; Geneviève with clasped hands, bent like a reed beneath so many crushing emotions, and Symphorien and Marie seemed bewildered by joy, astonishment, and a feeling of the marvellous. Old Claudine stood beside her mistress; she also was moved

to the very depths of her being, but in no way disturbed by a sight that her faith accepted as quite natural. Behind, at the door, the men and maid-servants crowded round in a compact group, with their heads passing one above the other in their efforts to see. The Abbé Antoine, the companion of the conqueror, was the secondary centre of all eyes and of a hundred silent questions. He replied to that discreet and sacred curiosity, by relating in detail all the history they were so anxious to know. He pictured to them the Curé Peyramale, little Pierre, and the Abbé Sire; the sudden cure in the Crypt, the *magnificat* in the Grotto, the conversion of the unbeliever, and the second First Mass. Listening to those episodes of the drama and beholding the issue of it all before him, Doctor Bidault stood petrified with amazement. He turned his eyes alternately on Victor de Musy, and on the image of the Redeemer hanging against the wall. . . . He felt as if he should like to penetrate the secrets of God. In truth, there would be here an admirable subject for a picture !

XXXII.

Just then Claudine left the room in quest of something that was wanted. Immediately those who had remained in the ante-room rushed tumultuously round her, to hear from her lips all that had been said, and of which only a few unintelligible words had reached them. She, however, was so overcome by emotion that talking was quite out of the question, so, resuming the whole history in a concise manner, rare in her sex, and worthy of Cæsar, she raised her bewildered hands to the ceiling,

and uttered the three words: "He sees! He stands upright! He walks!"

During the whole day the Château of Digoine was visited, one might almost say besieged, by the entire neighbourhood. Everyone wanted to see the man of the miracle, and the Abbé Antoine was exhausted with answering the thousand and one questions that assailed him on every side. At M. Humbert's request, he wrote a hasty and summary relation of the supernatural event accomplished at Lourdes, and sent it to the more distant members of the family and to a few friends. It was afterwards communicated to the newspapers.

XXXIII.

On the 8th of December following, at the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, the Abbé de Musy and his brother Humbert went to Lourdes on a pilgrimage of thanksgiving, and had a plate let into the stone floor of the Grotto in commemoration of the miraculous cure of the 15th of August.

The text of the plate runs thus:—

SURGE ET AMBULA (V. Luke 24),
VICTOR-MARIE DE MUSY, PRIEST
OF THE DIOCESE OF AUTUN.
CURED THE 15TH AUGUST, 1873.

Mgr. Langénieux, who had just been promoted to the bishopric of Tarbes, happened at that time to be at Lourdes, and wished to see the priest who, a few months before, had received such a signal grace. The prelate announced his intention of making a canonical inquiry,

and began it at once by a series of questions to which the Abbé de Musy had to reply in writing, after having sworn on his knees, and with his hand on the Holy Scriptures, to say nothing but the truth.

The miraculously cured man was piously eager after everything connected with Our Lady of Lourdes, and the memorable event which, henceforth, was to change and fill his whole life. Like the rest of the pilgrims, he gathered one or two flowers from the close neighbourhood of the sacred spot, flowers which had grown naturally, or been planted by the Curé Peyramale on the borders of the pathways, or the banks of the Gave. . . . And if we must own the truth, although the directors of the Grotto had had put up before it in large print: IT IS FORBIDDEN TO TAKE ANYTHING AWAY, it happened, so we are told, that one dark, cold December night, the two brothers succeeded in detaching (doubtless under the auspices of the Penitent Thief) a few fragments from the Rocks of Massabiella. . . .

They returned soon after to Digoine.

It would be easy to terminate here the narrative of this long episode. But, unless we are greatly mistaken in the feelings of our readers, they would not willingly separate from the privileged priest, without hearing how he employed his resuscitated life, and also what became of the different persons whom, in the course of this history, they have learned to know and to love.

XXXIV.

Amidst so many joys and emotions, the Abbé de Musy kept fresh and warm in his heart the remem-

brance of the companion in infirmity whom he had met at the Grotto, the gentle and innocent little Pierre. As soon as he got back to Digoine, he wrote to the father to enquire after the angelic child. The young invalid's state was still the same, and his sufferings were cruel. Several months having passed since then, the Abbé de Musy became anxious and wrote again. This was the father's answer :—

SIROS, 28th January, 1874.

“MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ.—You write to ask me for news of my dear child. He is no more. He breathed out his soul to God, the 21st of October, after having received the last sacraments. Before dying, he asked us to remember him, saying that, in his turn, he would not forget us.

“Since our return from Lourdes, his life was a real martyrdom. Some little time before his death, he was taken with a swelling which gradually spread over his whole body, even to the chest. ‘Father,’ he said to me, ‘I cannot breathe’. The persons present at the time said : ‘He is going’. I did not think so, and it occurred to me to take some water of Our Lady of Lourdes, and rub his poor body with a sponge dipped into it. As soon as the miraculous water touched his skin the swelling disappeared, and the body and members resumed their natural proportions. But a little time after, it reappeared, and we repeated the remedy. Three times the swelling went down immediately on the application of the water of Lourdes, and three times it came back again. In this manner God manifested His will, for in showing us that He heard our prayers and could cure the child if He would, He clearly showed us also, that in not doing so He destined him to another and better life. And that is why, *Monsieur l'Abbé*, I write to tell you he is gone to Heaven. It was the Will of God : may His Holy Name be praised !

“PIERRE ROCHON.”

In the course of these pages the reader has become acquainted with the intimate life and thoughts of a noble Christian family of one of the most illustrious houses of Burgundy. And here, in a village shoemaker's little shop, we find sentiments that for sublimity

of expression, are in every way equal to those of the patrician house. Thus does Religion, effacing the differences and discords of this world, raise the souls of the ignorant and the learned, the lowly and the high-born, to the same diapason, tuning them to the same celestial strain, and harmonising their accents in magnificent unison. The Magi and the Shepherds sing the same *Hosanna* !

XXXV.

The joy of the miracle had struck a fatal blow to the heart of Madame de Musy, but it pleased God to spare her some little time longer, that, in this life, she might have the consolation of beholding the dawn of her son's apostleship, and be able to watch the first steps of his new life, as in the distant days of the past she had watched over him at his birth.

From every part of the diocese, the Abbé de Musy was sent for, that he might relate before Christian congregations the amazing history of his cure. He was even called to Paris, where he spoke in the church of *Notre Dame des Victoires*. His account of the marvellous event, and his minute analysis of the circumstances which had prepared and accompanied it, rendered manifest the intervention of a Divine Hand. Wherever he went his burning eloquence, witnessing to what had been so marvellously accomplished, penetrated the souls of his listeners, and wrought in them powerfully for their good. Human nature is more accessible to palpable facts than to speculative ideas ; to a simple narrative, forcible and true, than to a learned dissertation. Hence these great results.

The Abbé Antoine also preached in different churches, with similar fruits of edification, the glory of Our Lady of Lourdes, and the miraculous cure of M. de Musy.

XXXVI.

The Abbé Genty, chaplain of the Carmelites of Autun, had been Madame de Musy's confessor for many years. He was a most venerable priest, a man of fervent piety and great learning. His penitent was accustomed by long habit, to open her whole heart to him without reserve, and obtain the help of his advice and encouragement in the incessant efforts she had made from her earliest youth to advance in the heavenly road of perfection. But it happened that M. Genty had been called by his bishop, Mgr. Perraud, to the functions of vicar-general of the diocese, and Madame de Musy, then ill and unable to leave Digoine, hesitated to call the excellent priest to her bedside, and thus disturb him in the midst of his numerous and overwhelming occupations. Therefore, discreet in that as in all else, she often deprived herself of the support and consolation her pious soul required.

One day she wrote and asked him to come and see her, and sent the carriage to fetch him. When he arrived and was brought to her room, he found the Abbé de Musy there.

"Father," she said, "I wished to consult you for the last time, on a new phase in my life as a Christian; on an important act I am contemplating."

The Abbé de Musy rose to go; she stopped him: "You can remain, I want you".

Her grave and solemn expression foreshadowed the accomplishment, on her part, of a resolution of an exceptional kind.

"Father," she continued, "in your own heart and before God, is it still your opinion and your decision, that, in the quality of his penitent, I may have confidence in my son, the Abbé Victor de Musy, as priest, confessor and director, and choose him henceforth as my spiritual father?"

"Yes," replied the priest, "and from this moment I confide to the son the conscience of his mother."

Madame de Musy looked, with an expression of unspeakable emotion, on the child she had brought into the world and given to God. He had fallen sobbing on his knees.

"My son," said she, "from this hour you will be my confessor; it is with you I shall treat of the affairs of my eternal welfare. I shall be your spiritual child, and I will obey you as my spiritual father."

XXXVII.

A few revolving seasons passed thus in unbroken peace. Madame de Musy's disease remained stationary, and her family banished all fear of a fatal issue. The Abbé de Musy pursued his apostolic missions, preaching, in the diocese and beyond it, the tidings of his miraculous cure. Every time he returned to Digoine after one of these journeys, he gladdened his mother's heart with an account of the conversions obtained—his missions were harvests of which the rich sheaves were offered to God. And thus the days flowed happily away.

Happiness, however, in this world is but a halt, only in heaven will it be our permanent state. Hardly has the pilgrim reposed himself an instant, and regained strength for the battle, in the delights of a fleeting joy, when the hour strikes that calls him back to labour and pain; pain and labour that must be accepted with thanksgiving, because they are the successive stepping-stones by which we gradually ascend to that Heavenly Father, Who leads us by the hidden and mysterious ways of His Providence, and waits to welcome us at the end of our journey.

Priests were scarce in the diocese of Autun, and it was easily to be foreseen that the bishop might require the services of the Abbé de Musy, in some fixed and regular post. His mother thought sadly sometimes of this probability, and hoped he would be called to the functions of chaplain in a convent, as that would leave him a certain leisure to devote to his own spiritual improvement, and his love of study. He was so accustomed to a contemplative life, he had been for so many years imprisoned in disease and infirmity, as in a cloistered cell separating him from the world, that the thought of being called to the militant existence of a parochial charge filled him with dismay. The times were passed when the pastor of the flock, tranquilly seated at the foot of the Cross, and meditating the pages of his breviary, could guard his sheep in peace and almost without effort. Alas! the faithful sheep were few, the lost sheep innumerable; lambs had become rams; wolves fell with impunity upon the sheep and the shepherd; irreligion had corrupted the people, and hostile passions had gained even the authorities, the

administrations, and the higher powers. It was not, let us hasten to add, the thought of fatigue and danger that made M. de Musy hesitate—his humility was alarmed, for he knew well, that with the best will in the world he lacked experience, and he would have considered it temerity, after his long life of solitude, to rush presumptuously into practical difficulties for which nothing in the past had in any way prepared him, and over which the most zealous priests were not always triumphant. About this time nothing was talked of in the neighbourhood but the imperative circumstances that had obliged the curé of one of the most important towns of the diocese, the Curé of Chagny, to give up his parish and send in his resignation.

The fact of the resignation of the Curé of Chagny had greatly impressed the Abbé de Musy. Although he did not feel threatened, at the beginning of his active clerical career, with anything more important than a simple curacy or the charge of some modest village, he was nevertheless apprehensive, and thought with justice, that he who has never handled an oar, may as easily wreck his bark against the trunk of a tree on some little pond, as on the reefs of a great ocean.

Mgr. Perraud, Bishop of Autun, was acquainted with his state of mind and his humble views and desires.

XXXVIII.

Towards the end of September, on Friday the 25th, the Abbé de Musy was sent for to the bishop's palace. He came away agitated and almost upset by his interview with his lordship. What had happened? A

letter from the bishop, dated two days later, and addressed to M. de Musy, will inform us.

“BISHOP'S PALACE, AUTUN, *27th September, 1874.*

“CHER MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ,

“I acquitted myself most conscientiously of the promise I made you on Friday. I submitted to the Council all the objections you had advanced, without in any way attenuating them, and although very much against my will, I constituted myself the advocate of your cause. But I lost it, and the members of the Episcopal Council, more capable than myself of judging the question, have decided that the Abbé de Musy, whose filial obedience is known to them, must submit and bend his shoulders to the yoke.

“We intend, therefore, to entrust to him the parish of Chagny, and we shall take care that he be seconded by a good curate.

“If I trouble you by insisting, my dear Abbé, you will, I hope, forgive me; and Our Lady of Lourdes, I am confident, will justify the choice we have made.

“Accept my sincere salutations in our Lord.

“✠ ADOLPHE-LOUIS, Bishop of Autun.”

The receipt of this letter aroused varied and conflicting feelings in the patriarchal family of Digoine. The father, who had perhaps feared that a convent chaplaincy might be for his son but the ante-room of the Cloister, hailed the episcopal decision with satisfaction, as also did Humbert, who saw, in this nomination to one of the most difficult posts in the diocese, a proof of high esteem for his brother's virtues and capabilities.

But far different were the feelings that stirred in the hearts of Madame de Musy and Victor. At first they were both overwhelmed, the priest by the thought of his incapacity, the mother at the perspective of the separation. The last fourteen months had been for Madame de Musy as the delicious oasis of her life. She had reposed herself fully in this anticipated beatitude; she

had, as it were, been lulled in the almost celestial delight of her ideal existence with her resuscitated son, now become her confessor and her father.

The valiant woman felt her strength failing an instant. It was but an instant—a few hours of inward combat and struggle, just long enough to conquer herself—even at the price of death—and gain a fresh palm.

The valiant Christian woman raised the courage of her son, despondent and overwhelmed with sorrow. She had said to herself, and she repeated to him, the watchword of those true heroes the Saints and Martyrs, “It is God’s will !”

“Yes, Victor, it is God’s will. Our Lady of Lourdes did not cure you for repose, but for labour ; not for me nor for you, but for this people. It is she who sends you to them, and she will give you strength for the work.”

Thus spoke the mother, pouring out her very self into her son’s heart. She had nourished him with her milk, now she strengthened him with her soul.

Mlle. Geneviève was away from Digoine at this time. And here we will quote a letter written to her by her brother the following week, showing, in all their limpid purity, the depths of these admirable natures.

“MY DEAR SISTER,—I have seen Monseigneur again ; he was extremely kind. I spoke to him about myself with a freedom and openness that set my heart at rest ; but he and his council are *absolutely determined* to place me at Chagny.

“I clearly see that this nomination is the work of the Blessed Virgin, it would be impossible to doubt it. Our Good Mother in Heaven wishes to try my faith and my heart. I am hers to do *whatever* she wishes. Be it humiliation or honour, peace or trouble, sorrow or joy, I am ready for all. Everyone expects great things from me in

the way of sanctity ; the bishop, the parishioners, the fifteen curés of my canton, the clergy of the diocese, and the civil administration. The Blessed Virgin leaves me in the middle of the current, she alone can bring me into port. I must have a blind and unlimited confidence in her. How fortunate for me, if, by confidence and trust in her, I succeed in doing all the good she expects from me. Our mother seems much pleased ; father always delighted ; Humbert is touched by this testimony of esteem. And you ? What do you think of this terrible affair ?

“Chagny is a parish of 4400 inhabitants. There is a very ugly church, a miserable presbytery, and hardly any garden. The post is painful and difficult. . . . *Marie Immaculée* has done me the very great honour of placing me in it in spite of my incapacity, and perhaps because of it. She will know how to manage, I am in her holy keeping. Adieu, dear Sister.”

XXXIX.

Two or three months were absorbed by the legal formalities that accompany the nomination of the curé of a canton, and it was only on the 17th of the following January, that the installation of the Abbé de Musy took place in the church of Chagny.

The Abbé Gardette, Archpriest of Saint Vincent de Châlon and Grand-Vicar of the palace, came to install him in the name of the Bishop, who was ill. He sketched in his discourse the portrait of the Catholic Pastor, the only true envoy of our Lord.

The Abbé de Musy mounted, in his turn, the pulpit stairs. He knelt and prayed for a few moments and then turned his face towards the people, henceforth to be his family.

“Just now,” said he, “you heard a pious and learned priest describe what a true pastor should be, a *Curé de Paroisse* after God’s own heart. In all sincerity, and with my whole soul, I have promised to try and be such

a priest. I have promised it to our Lord and to His Divine Mother. I am here amongst you, and have, from this moment, the charge of your souls, contrary to all natural prevision. I have never exercised my holy calling. I have been ill for twenty years: I could not use my eyes. For eleven years I have been deprived of the privilege of saying Mass. For many years I had lost the use of the voice which now addresses you. I was resigned to my state, and neither hoped nor asked for my cure. But others asked it for me, and I was, as it were, constrained to pray for it myself. Our Lady of Lourdes deigned to procure a favourable answer to our prayers. I received that signal favour with unfeigned joy, and every day I thank our Good Mother for it. . . . But it was for you, my brethren, that it was granted me; for you, who will possess, who do possess from this instant, my first and dearest affections. I give you myself and all that I have, my days and my nights, my watchings, my prayers, my health and strength recovered at Lourdes. For you I have left my family, my friends, and a ministry of missions that was dear to me, and I have done it gladly. I will not look back to the past, or forward to the future, but only to the present; to the work to be done with your souls; and for that all-important work I count on the help of Mary, for I have, thank God, no confidence in myself. Our Lady of Lourdes must continue her miracle; she alone, the Immaculate Virgin, will be the pastor of this parish. My first wish is that she may be venerated and beloved amongst you, as your Queen. Yes, dear brethren, you will offer her a filial devotion out of the fulness of your hearts, and she will complete,

for the salvation of your souls, the work she began at Lourdes.

“Every day I will pray to her for you. For you, old men, whose heads are whitened by age, and who are approaching the term of your pilgrimage, that she may prolong and bless the evening of your life, and finally assist you at that dread hour, when the doors of heaven will open before you. For you, men in the prime of life, who bear the burden and heat of the day, and who often find so much trouble and difficulty in conducting the affairs of life, that she may help, enlighten and direct you. For you, young men, exposed to the storms and temptations of youth, that she may preserve you from all evil, and give you grace usefully to employ the powerful energies that animate you. For you, young women, that she may preserve you in innocence and fill you with the love of the Lord. For you, little ones, that, under her eye, you may grow like her Divine Son, in wisdom, and age, and grace with God and men. For those gone astray, that she may lead them back to the right road; for the wicked, that she may make them good; for the good, that they may become better. . . . And you, too, must pray to her for me, that she may give me something of her heart to love you more and more, and something of her power to serve you better and better.”

At these apostolic and paternal accents, the multitude who thronged the church shed tears.

In the afternoon, a porter from the railway brought a parcel to the presbytery. He was one of the men who, eighteen months previously, on the night of the 6th of August, had helped to transport from the carriage

to the waiting-room, and from the waiting-room to the train, the helpless and powerless priest on his way to Lourdes in quest of a miracle. Remembering all these details, and speaking of them to those around him, he could not take his eyes from that same priest, miraculously cured, and become by a special dispensation of Providence, the curé of the very parish where, in his pilgrimage of hope, he had stopped on his first nocturnal halt, his first painful station.

All Christian hearts in the parish of Chagny, and even many unbelieving ones, rejoiced that day. The installation of the Man of the Miracle, the burning words that had stirred up the noblest feelings of the heart, announced a promising future.

During that radiant ceremony, the same expression was on all lips—the signs of a dawn without a cloud, and of a joyful confidence. “This is the beginning of a good day!”

But earthly things are like the earth itself, that perpetually turns on its axis from light to darkness and from darkness to light. While the first rays of day were rising over Chagny, the melancholy shadows of the west were coming slowly down on the old Château of Digoine.

XL.

Not many days after the departure of her son to take possession of his cure, Madame de Musy felt the heart disease caused by the sudden joy of the miracle, become suddenly much worse. The happiness of the last few months had checked its course, but, alas! had not cured it. New and alarming symptoms became apparent, and

the doctors soon pronounced themselves powerless to check the progress of the disease. "She will not last many months"—was their verdict.

The valiant woman descended the supreme path and followed the avenue leading to the tomb, with the sublime serenity of her everyday life. She had nothing to change and she changed nothing in the routine of her daily occupations. She continued to commune with God, by reading, meditation and prayer; she continued to direct her household and acquit herself of her works of mercy; she continued to help the poor and sick. The nature of her disease permitted her to be dressed and to sit in her easy chair. The only difference was that those to whom she used to go, now came to her. The poor and unhappy were brought by Claudine to the side of the dying woman. Two days before her death, for the last time, she dressed the wounds of Jesus Christ in the person of one of the poor of the neighbourhood. With her failing fingers she arranged the lint and bandages, and like a heroine of charity she expired on her battlefield.

Now and then her beloved son came to see her. What sweet yet bitter hours must they have passed together!

On the 7th of July, she sent to Chagny to fetch him.

"Madame wishes to see you," said the servant.

"Is she worse?"

"I do not know."

The Abbé de Musy hastened to her side.

"My son," said she, "I must regulate all my spiritual and temporal affairs to-day."

Then she confessed to the son whom she had sent to Our Lady of Lourdes, so infirm, so worn with disease,

and whom the Mother of God had sent back to her so strong and well. She submitted all her difficulties and anxieties to the wisdom and power of the priest, she poured forth her soul into his for the last time before leaving this world, and when a movement or an accent of his voice betrayed the emotion that suffocated him, interrupting herself, she would say softly, "Come, Victor, my dear Victor, a little courage!" and then quietly continue her confession.

"And now," she resumed, when she had received absolution, "we must put our temporal affairs in order also."

So saying, she gave Victor the key of the secretary that he might look over the family papers under her superintendence and receive her instructions concerning them. Her memory was exact, her mind easy, her speech clear and precise, her countenance sometimes smiling. The rays of the lamp shone with their usual steady light. Her profound peace reassured her son, and though it could not remove his despondency, it gave a sovereign sweetness to the interview of that last day. Notwithstanding the opinion of the doctors, he began, in a vague manner, to hope again, for there are some realities that the heart refuses to accept.

Madame de Musy gave him a sum of money to pay the journey of some poor sick person to Lourdes.

"He will pray for me!" she said.

"For your recovery!" added her son.

She shook her head and repeated gravely:

"He will pray for me there!" . . .

Some of the Abbé de Musy's parishioners were dangerously ill, and their lives were doubly in danger, for

the soul as well as for the body. For their sakes the Curé had to go back that night, that he might be able to return to Digoine the next day. But a little before he started, and as the lovely July sun was sinking in the west, Madame de Musy turned to him and said:

"My son, the moment has arrived to give me Extreme Unction; I wish to receive it at your hands."

"What! mother!" . . .

"Come, my child; a little more courage, the hour is come!"

He obeyed, and in the midst of the weeping family performed the solemn ceremony, his mother herself guiding him, for he was cruelly moved and had some difficulty in restraining his emotion. He anointed with holy oil the maternal eyes, so often fixed in the course of her life on the image of Jesus Christ; the ears, which, above the discordant noises of the earth, had listened to the sweet harmonies of heaven and the teachings of Holy Church; the tongue, whose Christian words had spread so many truths and consoled so many sorrows; the feet, that had known so well the road that led to the poor, and had so steadily walked in the straight path; the charitable hands, that had distributed so many alms and dressed the wounds of so many suffering ones. He prepared for death her from whom he had received life; he opened the tomb to her who once had laid him in his cradle.

When all was ended, she said to her son:

"Now I am ready and all things are accomplished. . . . Go back to your parish, there are souls there who need you."

But the priest, whose agitation was only equalled by his mother's calm, begged her to let him stay.

"No," she said, "your duty is at Chagny with the dying. I am prepared."

The Abbé de Musy, broken-hearted, insisted:—"I pray you, mother, let me remain with you!"

"What! Are you wanting in courage!" she said. "God is calling you yonder!"

And the valiant woman gave a farewell kiss to her beloved child.

When he was gone, she drew the curtain from the window and remained watching till the carriage was out of sight and she could no longer hear the harness-bells. Then she burst into tears. Very soon after fever came on. All the night through she called for Victor. . . . Alas! the next day, when Victor arrived, his beloved and venerated mother, stretched on the bed of death, slept her last sleep.

XLI.

More than six years have passed since her death. The Count de Musy and his son Humbert repose by the side of the admirable Christian woman, whose mild and noble character we have endeavoured to retrace in these pages.

Symphorien de Musy, Humbert's son, lives in the Château of Digoine. His sister Marie, now the Countess de Prunelé, often goes there with her family; and to follow the paths of virtue, they have but to walk in the way already traced out for them.

Through the woods there is a road, shorter than the

avenue, which used to bring into nearer and more direct communication the sick poor and their remedy, necessity and relief, the misery from without, and the charity from within. A post placed at the entrance of this path, bears the name given by the whole country-side to that privileged road—“*The path of the Good Lady*”.

Our friend the Abbé Antoine, after having been professor in the Seminary of Autun, is Precentor at Chauffailles, preparing others for Holy Orders as he himself was once prepared, and rendering a hundredfold to the Church the benefit he has received from her.

Mlle. Geneviève has built a little house near her brother's presbytery, and helps him in all his good works.

As he had announced to his parishioners, the Curé of Chagny has constituted Our Lady of Lourdes the Queen of his parish, and at all hours and in all circumstances, he seeks help from her. The throne on which he has placed her is similar to the one she chose for herself at the foot of the Pyrenees. The Abbé de Musy has erected in his church a reproduction of the Grotto of Massabiella, with the statue of Mary. Before the Grotto is an altar where he, who was for so many years paralytic and helpless, comes to ask his Deliverer:—“What do you wish me to do to-day?”

Employing his whole heart and mind and strength in the cultivation of the vineyard confided to his care by God, he works at the conversion of the present generation, and devotes his fortune to preparing a better generation in the future. He has built immense schools at his own expense where hundreds of children are educated. He can be seen at those schools every day.

Sometimes he goes to Digoine : every year he goes to Lourdes for the anniversary of his miraculous cure, and in this way, if he happens to experience any trouble in the present, he strengthens his soul by the contemplation of the future and the memory of the past.

LES BRETOUX, *February, 1882.*

THE JOINER OF LAVAUR.

I.

A jovial companion in his time was the journeyman joiner François Macary. Always chatty and gay, and the foremost in fun and laughter. Nimble-footed and clever-handed, he had gone the round of France, to Nantes, Cambrai, Nîmes, Marseilles and Lyons, and from being apprentice soon became master-joiner. A good workman and jovial companion, he was fond of work and did not despise pleasure. He was not troubled with many prejudices. Having completed his very complete course of philosophy by the reading of a few bad novels and worse newspapers, he promptly rid himself of anything like superstition, threw belief to the winds, and thus disembarrassed of all dead-weights, he travelled gaily along the road of life.

As he thus rambled about the world, perfecting himself in his trade, his free-thinking became still freer. He did not encumber the churches with his presence, and his voice was not given to psalm-singing. Songs of another sort were more to his mind. Whenever one of the good women in the houses where he lodged, spoke to him about prayer, he would answer abruptly, "Working is praying!" without ever stopping

to think of the other reading of that truth, "Praying is working!"

In religion, as in everything else, his impetuous disposition could accept neither lukewarmness nor a just medium, it may therefore be supposed that he was not long in breaking down the frail barrier that separates indifference from hostility, and in becoming a declared enemy of the Truth.

Notwithstanding all that, he was a worthy fellow; hot-headed but good-hearted; loyal and prepossessing, open as day, obliging with his comrades, and gifted with that natural wit and picturesque imagination so frequently found amongst the people of the South. Wherever he went he was sure of a welcome. He was easily moved by whatever appeared to him noble or good, always compassionate for the troubles of others, and willing to help those weaker than himself with his strong arm, or relieve those poorer than himself from his shallow purse. With that, hasty in temper and explosive as gunpowder. The least thing that went wrong, a broken plane, a tottering bench, a knot in a plank, put him beside himself with impatience, and his impatience invariably vented itself in an exclamation that was either an oath, an imprecation, or a blasphemy. Never were heard more appalling interjections than those which, from morning till night, mingled with the sounds of sawing and hammering in Macary's workshop.

II.

In 1833, after eight years passed in wandering from town to town in search of perfection, the journeyman

joiner went back to his native town of Lavaur.* He had retained just sufficient Christianity to wish for the sacrament of marriage.

But before going further we may mention that, if the idea of religion for himself, and for men in general, was repugnant to him, he held it as essentially important that women should be pious; and to those who reasoned with him on such contradictory principles, he replied by the most unexpected arguments.

"When I used to go to school," he would say laughing, "I was taught in my grammar that *La Religion* belonged to the feminine gender and not to the masculine."

"But, surely, if you think religion true and proper for women, why should it not be as suitable for men, and why should you not practise it yourself?"

"You might as well suggest that if I consider a dress suitable for a woman, I ought to put on a petticoat myself!"

The real motive hidden beneath these jokes and paradoxes was that in his travels, Macary, who was naturally a keen observer, had noted that good Christian women made good wives, while the opposite was the case with girls who professed no religion. Very soon, then, after his return to Lavaur, he led to the altar a pious young girl, who seemed to possess every quality requisite to make him happy. She was a fervent Catholic, and as she loved her husband tenderly, she naturally desired to discuss the great question of religion with him, and draw him again within the pale of the Church. So one evening as they were walking up and down under the trees, by the soft light of the honeymoon, she began an

* Lavaur is a sous-préfecture in the department of Tarn.

apostolic speech, that she had been carefully meditating. But the workman cut the homily short.

"I love you passionately, my dear little Virginie," said he, "and you preach very well, almost as well as *Monsieur le Curé*. But if I do not go to hear sermons at church, it is probably because I do not like them, so it is useless treating me to them at home. My ideas on that point are unchangeable, as unchangeable as my love for you, my darling, so instead of sermonising, be content with loving me and being loved in return. Do not fall into the error of seeking to force your own opinions on your husband and worrying him continually to go to Mass or confession. If you compromise our peace by trying to turn me about your finger, we shall always be quarrelling, and I shall end by hating religion even in women."

The young wife's eyes were full of tears.

"Come!" said François, kissing her, "let us say no more about it, or rather, do *you* remain silent on the subject. If you think I am not religious enough, you may be religious for us both, your *Bon Dieu* will lose nothing by the bargain, nor I neither. We shall each have our task in the house, my little wife; I will work for you, and you shall pray for me."

Virginie, being an intelligent woman, understood (what most women ignore) that a husband's conversion is not to be obtained by overdue pressure, pertinacity and torrents of words—means that are seldom efficacious and always dangerous—but by the surer and more patient means of the example of Christian virtues put into practice every hour of the day by the domestic hearth and in the home circle; and by the voice of per-

severing prayer, knocking without ceasing at the door of Heaven. So the young wife hid her trouble in her heart and maintained an unbroken silence on the forbidden topic.

"Henceforth," she thought, "I will say nothing; but pray and wait for the hour of grace, and my only preaching shall be to try and grow better every day, and render my husband happy."

Consequently Macary was happy.

But happiness is fugitive, and hardly do we think we possess it than it escapes from our grasp and vanishes away. Such, alas! was the case with the poor joiner's too brief felicity

III.

He had only been married a few months and was still in the first bliss of his union with his excellent wife, when a disease which had vaguely threatened him towards the end of his journeyings, began to assume serious proportions. Large varicose veins came out on his legs, and were most painful and exhausting. The person so afflicted experiences extreme lassitude and acute suffering when standing up. Macary found that out by cruel experience; but as he was not a man to give way easily before pain, he struggled bravely against his infirmity.

"I have two lazy legs," he would say, "that would like to go to bed early and get up late. If they were two servants I would turn them out of doors, but since I am bound to keep them, I will give them such a shaking up that, whether they like it or not, they shall be forced to do their duty."

And all day long, by a violent effort, he stood on his legs, planing and joining as usual, and obstinately refusing to see a doctor. Two or three years passed in this way, when an incident—his mother's illness—brought Doctor Rossignol to his house.

"Well, François," said the latter, "there you are, always indefatigable. I never pass in the street without seeing you at work."

"Indefatigable?" said Macary; "not exactly. As soon as I am up in the morning, and during the whole of the day, my legs feel like lead; I have sharp shooting pains in the calves as if you were sticking your lancet into them. And in the evening my legs are all swelled up."

"You work too hard, my good friend."

"That is a rich man's excuse; a poor man can never work hard enough. My children eat like ravens already."

"You must have a thick vein all down your thigh, I think?"

"I have two immense veins. One in each leg."

"Let me see." . . .

"They are varicose veins," said the doctor after examining them; "they are very large indeed, and threaten to assume alarming proportions. The lumps are considerable and there is a marked obstruction. You must take most serious measures."

"What ones?"

"You must compress your legs with linen bandages, and strap them up in leather gaiters; and at the least fatigue you must lie down and rest yourself."

The very window-panes must have trembled at

the terrific oath with which Macary received this advice.

"What! Stop working at twenty-six? A nice father of a family you would make of me! You must be laughing at me." And he looked as if he would like to turn the doctor out of doors.

He continued to treat himself in his own manner, but the disease rapidly gained ground, and he was forced at last to consult the doctor of the St. Louis Mutual Help Society, of which he was a member. Doctor Ségur's opinion was the same as Doctor Rossignol's.

"Unless you follow my advice, you will lose the use of your legs. At forty you will be an old man."

Now Macary was extremely practical. The unanimity of the two doctors' opinions, confirmed, besides, by his own ever-increasing sufferings which were becoming intolerable, brought him to reason. He resigned himself, not without tempests of fury and invective, to the treatment prescribed by the doctors. He rested from time to time and encased his legs, from his toes to his knees, in linen bandages, over which he wore strong dogskin gaiters tightly laced together.

But in spite of all precautions the varicose veins grew worse from year to year. When Macary was about thirty-five or forty, the two inner saphena veins had swelled enormously, and stood out under the skin as thick as a finger. Lumps had formed of extraordinary dimensions, as large as an egg, which, when the patient took off his bandages, looked like great wens. A little later on the legs began to ulcerate and had to be dressed with cerate and lint.

Henceforth, the unfortunate man could only work a

few hours a day, and very often he had to stop work altogether for a month and more at a time, and keep his bed or lie on a sofa. Old age had come on prematurely as Doctor Ségur had warned him it would, at least as far as his legs were concerned, for the rest of his body remained perfectly healthy, and his mind had retained its youthful vivacity.

His deplorable condition got gradually worse. He saw his children growing up around him, and was exasperated at his inability to be the first and the last in the workshop.

"I am not worth a quarter of an apprentice!" he would cry sometimes, smiting a formidable blow with the hammer on his working bench.

Now and then, when enforced inaction had put him beside himself with impatience, he would tear off his gaiters and bandages and throw them out of the window, as if, by getting rid of the remedy, he could drive away the disease. But a few minutes after he howled with anguish. The blood rushed into the veins no longer compressed, and seemed like liquid fire burning into his flesh. Macary, suffering like a soul in perdition and swearing like one too, called for his bandages again, with the same fury he had employed in tearing them off. "Make haste!" he would say, "and put my dogskin on my dog of a skin."

The present was gloomy, the future without hope of cure or even of relief. The joiner had consulted other doctors, amongst them Doctor Bernet; everywhere and by everyone he had been declared incurable. The faculty was unanimous.

It only remained for him to bear his sufferings with

patience and resignation. But to Macary patience was unknown, and the sweet flower of resignation did not bloom amongst the harsh fruits of his garden. The active and impetuous man condemned to immobility ; the fiery nature driven violently back and imprisoned between four walls, could only find relief in imprecations. He growled, stormed, and fulminated from morning till night. A regular domestic thunderstorm.

This tempest of pain and passion lasted ten, twenty, thirty years. For thirty years Macary was on the rack and knew not what saint to invoke ; or rather, as the reader has guessed, he did not invoke any saint at all, but instead, devoted himself to the devil from morning till night. When he addressed himself to heaven it was by imprecations, and prayer was replaced by blasphemy. *Non precabat, imprecabat.* The name of God could be heard in his house, at every hour of the day, but only in frenzied exclamations and interjections of rage.

IV.

In that same house, however, the same sacred name was often pronounced in a reverent whisper. Macary's pious wife and his daughter, Delphine, prayed with their whole hearts, and He who hears the secret murmur of the Christian, was doubtless more attentive to those humble supplications poured forth in silence, than to the noisy outbursts of the exasperated joiner. They could not hope for the cure of an incurable disease and did not ask impossibilities, but they prayed God to soften the bitterness of the trial and pacify the rebellious soul of the sufferer.

That nothing may be forgotten, we will here add that if Macary revolted against Heaven in a sort of open war, he had always lived at peace with his fellow-men, and had remained, in ripe manhood and in the evening of life, the same frank, open, obliging fellow that he had shown himself in his youth. He cherished his wife and children, and assuredly, if he had died at that moment, he might have had engraved on his tomb, the epitaph (so often untrue!) that may be read at every step on the marble of the cemeteries:—"He was a good husband and father". His fits of passion attacked things, not persons, he was furious against his ill-luck, but perfectly gentle and affectionate with the companion of his life; and if, in the midst of his oaths and stormings, one of his children or grand-children (for time had gone on, and he was a grandfather) came near him, he was calmed as by magic, and smiled tenderly on them. He was an excellent neighbour, charitable and cordial, and the needy never knocked at his door in vain. Macary had but little, yet he willingly shared that little. His compassion for other people's troubles made him forget his own; and though his own sufferings might draw cries of pain from his lips, the sufferings of others drew tears from his eyes. Many times, giving alms of the work that was so painful and difficult for him, he would enjoy the noble satisfaction of making a bedstead, or a cupboard, or a table for some poor destitute home. Like the widow spoken of in the Gospel and praised by the Saviour, he gave of his very substance, as if to yield to the promptings of pity was more necessary to him than the necessities of life themselves.

When a man without religion possesses such qualities

as these, or to speak more justly, when he practises such virtues towards his fellow-men, his apparent impiety towards God proceeds from a pure misunderstanding. If he blasphemes it is through ignorance, because he does not comprehend and because his ideas have been warped. The wrong he does in such a case, however monstrous may be its form in our judgment, proceeds infinitely less from perversion of the will than from an error of the mind and a partial overclouding of the reason, little intellectual miseries which God pities and takes into consideration in the touching verdict of his forgiving justice.

Through the mud of the gutter the eye of the Almighty discerns the rays of the pure diamond. Thus it often happens that the Father of Mercy takes pleasure in turning those generous wanderers into servants and friends. While the blasphemers are uttering their blasphemies, or the furious exhaling their fury, the day of grace marked by Providence comes upon them. God calls them suddenly as He called Saint Paul, and, in a voice that brings them prostrate on their knees, He says: "Why persecutest thou Me?" To the amazement of all He gives the preference to the publican's house: "Zacheus, make haste, and come down; for this day I must abide in thy house". Nay, more, He quotes them as examples to the orthodox officials, the men of strict dogma and literal practice, and when he wants to show these latter a type and pattern to be followed, he chooses some poor lost one on the road between Jerusalem and Jericho, upright in heart, though perhaps out of the right path in understanding, and He relates to His Disciples the divine story of the Samaritan.

Never let us forget that not in vain has the Lord chosen to be called the "*Bon Dieu*". Amongst His numberless and limitless perfections the chief one, so to say, is goodness; and goodness is above all the characteristic of His children. "Be ye therefore merciful as your Father also is merciful. . . . Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy." Whoever is good belongs to the flock even though he seem to be without the fold; and the Divine Shepherd comes in a blessed hour to seek the lost sheep marked with His mark, the lost drachma stamped with His image and superscription: *Deus charitas est!*

*"La Bonté, c'est le fond des natures augustes.
D'une seule vertu Dieu fait le cœur des justes,
Comme d'un seul saphir le coupole du ciel."*

God will even work a miracle rather than not save such souls and such hearts. From His invisible throne comes a voice audible to mortal ear, He cries to Augustine: "Take and read; *Tolle, lege!*" and He places beneath his eyes the apostolic page that is to convert him.

V.

The excellent blasphemer, Macary, had been then for more than thirty years in the state we have just described. As we have already said, if at certain periods he could stand up and work for a few hours, or walk about a little, there were other and longer periods when he was obliged to remain in a lying posture. This was especially the case when the ulcers suppurated very much. His little business had to be arranged in view

of these continual stoppages, or he would have lost his customers and been utterly ruined. Macary had brought up his son Charles to the business of joiner, and the latter was as clever a workman as his father. He was married and lived close by, but he came to work in his father's shop every morning and kept the business going.

VI.

About the middle of July, 1871, Macary had been stretched for six weeks on his sofa, condemned to complete immobility by the intensity of the disease and the open wounds of the ulcers. He was in a deplorable state, both physically and morally ; his body eaten up with pain, and his whole soul absorbed in dreary melancholy. It occurred to him that if he had something to read it would divert his mind, so he asked them to get him a book he had heard of as containing most extraordinary things. He mentioned it as he might have mentioned a volume of fairy tales or *The Thousand and One Nights*. Providence, however, intended to turn this chance reading to account for its own purposes. When God, in the hours of yesterday—fifteen hundred years ago, but to Him not even as a single day—when God had resolved to conquer Monica's son, He placed in the hands of that prince of intellect and science, that great philosopher and profound thinker, the Divine Book itself, the text traced by the pen of the great Apostle Paul and inspired by the Paraclete. But for the joiner Macary, the illiterate Samaritan, the poor publican, the horny-handed workman, handling the saw and the plane on his humble bench, it was not needful to have recourse to such depths

and such splendours : neither to an epistle written by a Saint, nor to an inspired text.

The volume that Macary had asked for was a contemporary work, a history of Apparitions and Miracles, written by a man of the world, a layman, some one or anyone, a publican also.

The book, entitled *Notre Dame de Lourdes*, having been brought to him late in the evening, he took it up listlessly at his waking next morning and glanced at the first pages, stopping every now and then to direct the work then in hand, or enquire if such and such things had been taken home ; but by degrees, he became silent and absorbed in his reading, and seemed to see and hear nothing of exterior things. As a traveller leaving the high-road scorched with the summer sun, enters a thick forest where cool shades and woodland silence await him, and where, walking in solitary paths beneath the thick arches of the green trees overhead, he feels himself separated from the rest of the world and lost in the majestic bosom of nature—so Macary, as he advanced in his reading, became gradually absorbed by unknown feelings which penetrated him irresistibly, separated him from all worldly preoccupation and mysteriously enveloped him in a vivifying atmosphere, filled with the presence of the Living God.

His strongly-marked face was bathed in tears.

“Why ! you are crying !” cried his wife in amazement ; “what is there so dreadful in that book then ?”

“My dear wife, I cannot tell you—let me be ! let me be !”

“Well, but read me a few pages that I may know what it is about.”

“No, no! it is impossible! My tears choke me. We will read it together afterwards, but now I must have it all to myself.”

It seemed to François Macary that he was waking from a bad dream, and emerging from a long dark night, into the brilliant rays of unexpected day. The brightness dazzled his eyes. His country, the country of the immortal soul, so long forgotten, reappeared before him with its rivers of living waters, its refreshing peace and its celestial horizons. Old Macary had recovered the Faith of his childhood.

What was it that acted so powerfully upon him? Was it the book itself? Certainly not. No more than the simple water of earthly fountains acts in Baptism. No more than the trumpets of the Jews acted on the walls of Jericho, which fell at their sound. It was the blessing of God shed upon a means, valueless in itself; but all things become instruments of good in the hands of Him who made the world out of nothing.

When Macary read the chapters where the author relates the miraculous effects of the supernatural source which sprang up at the command of the Blessed Virgin in the Grotto of Lourdes, he felt within himself a secret conviction that if he could procure some of that water he would be cured.

Faith did not return alone into his soul, it was accompanied by hope.

Having opened the book with the first dawn of day, he finished it with the last rays of the setting sun.

VII.

That day, which was destined to mark a great date in his life, was a Sunday, the 16th July, 1871, the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, and the 13th anniversary of the Apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary to Bernadette Soubirous.

"From that moment," he wrote to a friend later on, "the hand of God was upon me and guided me. Without it I never could have thought of getting up, when I could hardly move for the state of my legs and when it was agony to stand, and taking the few steps that were to lead me to health by a way I little guessed."

It was about eight in the evening. All day long the heat had been intense.

"I cannot stay on this sofa any longer," said Macary. "I must get some air ; let us go for a turn."

"But how can you go for a turn, my poor François," replied his wife, "when you are not even able to stand?"

"No matter, I don't care. My legs may grumble if they like, I have borne them long enough, and the least they can do is to bear me sometimes."

"Come ! come ! Do not be rash !"

"I mean to get out of this room and breathe the fresh air. Give me your arm."

He was already on his legs, and, whether or no, they were obliged to let him have his way.

Leaning with one hand on his devoted Virginie, the faithful support and stay of his sickness and old age, and with the other on a stout knotty stick, he dragged himself with difficulty along the street leading to Saint Alain, the Cathedral of Lavaur.

So violent was the pain he endured, that nothing less than his extraordinary energy could have kept him on his legs under such atrocious sufferings. He managed, however, to reach his sister's house. Madame Bonafous saw him from her window and hailed him.

"Where are you going, François?"

"For two pins I would go and throw myself over the bridge. My legs feel like red-hot irons."

"Come in and rest a little."

"Rest? my dear Mary! . . . I don't know what it is!" The room being on the ground floor he opened the door and sat down overcome.

They talked for a few moments. On what subject is of little moment, but while they were talking, night came on and they could no longer recognise the faces of the passers-by.

A priest went along the street. It was one of the curates of the Cathedral, the Abbé Coux.* As he drew near the open window he recognised the joiner's voice, which was sufficiently characteristic, being clear and abrupt.

"What, Macary, are you there?" he called from outside. "You are better then?"

"On the contrary, *Monsieur l'Abbé*, I am worse. I should like to sell you the skin of my legs, but I warn you it is not worth much. It is all over varicose veins, ulcers, lumps, and knots. Before, behind, to the right, to the left, at the ankles, the calves, from the toes to the knees, it is as full of holes as an old stocking."

The Abbé Coux entered the house. He exhorted

* The Abbé Coux is now *Curé* at Lagrave, near Gaillac in the diocese of Alby.

Macary to patience and resignation; and after exchanging a few words in a general way he rose to go.

"I must leave you," he said, "to finish my packing. I start for *Notre Dame de Lourdes* to-morrow, and if you have any commissions I will gladly undertake them."

At the words, *Notre Dame de Lourdes*, Macary suddenly raised his head.

"Yes, certainly, I have a commission! If your Blessed Virgin has compassion on the afflicted, she might surely have pity on me. Tell her there is a poor wretch at Lavour whose legs are rotting away with disease, and that one does not leave a man in such a state as that, if it is possible to help him out of it. Tell her I am worn out with suffering; that I can bear it no longer, and she must either kill or cure me!" . . .

"I shall not ask her to kill you, you may be sure," replied the Abbé, smiling, "and she would certainly not listen to me if I did."

Macary thought of the book he had been reading, and the miraculous cures it contained; and he felt within himself a strong revival of hope.

"*Monsieur l'Abbé*," he resumed gravely, "if you will bring me a little of that water and pray for me, you will render me a great service."

"I promise you I will," replied the Abbé.

VIII.

On the following Wednesday, the 19th of July, about nine o'clock at night, François Macary's sister, Marie, the same Madame Bonafous to whose house he had so laboriously dragged himself, and where he had seen the

Abbé Coux, opened the door of his room, and came in. The Abbé was come back and had sent him a little bottle of water of Lourdes, about a fifth of a litre.

“That is the thing for me !” cried Macary, beaming with delight ; “I shall soon be cured now ! . . . Good night, Mary !”

The joiner got off his sofa with the help of his wife, then holding on to the furniture with one hand, and leaning on her shoulder with the other, he hobbled painfully to his bedroom. He put the bottle of water of Lourdes on a table, and kneeling down before a crucifix that his pious wife had hung over the fireplace the day of their marriage, he prayed a short prayer, the only one he could remember, to the Blessed Virgin. It was the “Hail Mary !” which floated up in his memory from the wreck of his religious recollections, and which he recited with his whole soul. Then he took off his dressings, his bandages, and his dogskin gaiters, and pouring a little of the mysterious water into the hollow of his hand, he gently moistened his two legs, the veins, the enormous lumps, and the suppurating sores. His whole being was in prayer ; not, as just now, in a set form of words, but with a profound and inward uplifting, a mute and eloquent faith, the supreme prayer in spirit and in truth spoken of by the Lord Jesus, and which ascends straight to the pity of Almighty God.

A little water still remained in the bottle.

“Drink that, my man !” said Macary to himself. And he swallowed at a draught all that was left.

The linen bandages and the laced gaiters with which he enveloped his diseased legs, were lying on his bed. It was Macary’s custom of a night after he was in bed,

to roll up those bandages with the greatest care (they were each about five or six metres long), ready for use the next morning. On the evening of which we are speaking, however, he did nothing of the kind. A man of such an impetuous nature would give an impetuous turn even to his very faith. He gathered up his bandages and gaiters, rolled them into a shapeless mass, and threw them with all his strength into a corner of the room.

“Good night, gaiters and bandages,” cried he, as they flew from his hand, “good-bye for ever, dogskin and laces! Since the Blessed Virgin has cured so many others, she will certainly cure me too. Never again will you be twisted round *my* legs!”

Macary’s wife, though a fervent Christian, did not share her husband’s imperturbable confidence. She smiled sadly at his curious mixture of prayer and hastiness, as she thought to herself. “Alas! my poor old man! the bandages and dogskins will have to go on again to-morrow, and then we shall hear the usual accompaniment of expletives.”

Faith generally in the power of God and in the reality of miracles does not imply special faith in a certain fixed miracle that other people choose to proclaim as indubitable. Nature revolts against belief in anything beyond its comprehension, and to nature a miracle seems an impossibility. Thus in the ancient Biblical times, Sara, the wife of Abraham, laughed when she heard the angel proclaim her tardy maternity; and the joiner’s wife laughed on the 19th of July, 1871, when her husband announced with audacious assurance his certain and immediate cure.

Macary was generally a long time getting to sleep at night ; for when the bandages were removed from his legs the blood rushed into the veins in torrents, causing him acute feverish pain, and consequent sleeplessness for several hours.

But he had hardly laid his head on the pillow that night when he fell into a deep sleep, to the great astonishment of his wife, who crept noiselessly away and went to bed, leaving the door of communication between the rooms wide open. The lights were put out, and darkness and silence reigned in the house.

IX.

About midnight Macary woke up. Contrary to the usual state of things he felt no pain in his legs. He passed his hand over them. The lumps were gone !

“ Wife ! ” cried he. “ I am cured ! ”

“ You are dreaming, my poor François,” she answered. “ You are dreaming. Go to sleep ! ”

“ I am not dreaming,” answered Macary. “ I touched my legs, and ” . . .

But sleep, for a moment interrupted, weighed down his eyelids anew, and notwithstanding his delightful surprise, his head fell on the pillow again, and his senses were lost in profound slumber.

He opened his eyes at five in the morning. The July sun was shining in at the window, and now he could not only touch his legs but look at them too. They were perfectly whole and sound. The distended veins had diminished to their right size, the ulcers, the lumps,

the knots had all disappeared, and the skin was soft and supple to eye and touch. Ah! if up to that moment Macary had always expressed his feelings by terrific oaths, the cry to which he now gave vent denoted the complete revolution that had taken place in his nature. The poor fellow clasped his hands and raised them to heaven: "O God! O Blessed Virgin of Lourdes!" And embracing in the same thought his Heavenly Benefactors, and the tried companion of his earthly pilgrimage, he called out in a voice that betrayed inexpressible agitation:

"Virginie! Virginie!"

She thought he was calling for help, and sprang out of bed in terror. Her husband, his face bathed in tears, showed her his legs perfectly whole and sound.

"Now look!" he cried. "You would not believe me last night, when I told you I was cured!"

She looked and trembled, and falling on her knees by the bedside, buried her face in her hands and sobbed aloud. •

Macary got out of bed, stood up, walked about without gaiters or bandages and felt neither pain nor fatigue. He knelt down and prayed, then hurrying into the workshop he lifted and carried a great plank without the least effort, took it to his working-bench, fixed it and began planing it. His son Charles coming in for his day's work found him thus occupied, and uttered a cry of surprise.

"What! father? You up already and in the workshop? . . . What in the world has happened?"

"What has happened, my boy! Why, the water of Lourdes has taken effect. Come and see!"

And turning his wide linen trousers up above his knees, he uncovered his legs.

The son was stricken dumb, as the mother had been a few minutes before, and could not utter a word. He pressed his father in his arms and wept silently.

X.

In the course of the morning Macary caught sight of a priest passing rapidly along on his way to the cathedral, and recognised the Abbé Coux. He rushed to the door, but the priest was already fifteen or twenty paces off.

"Good morning, *Monsieur l'Abbé!*" cried Macary. "The Blessed Virgin has answered your prayers and mine too. I am cured! Come and see!"

"Very well! Very well!" replied the Abbé Coux, who either did not hear distinctly, or who feared some trick on the part of the workman, and certainly did not for a moment suppose it possible that an incurable disease of more than thirty years' standing had disappeared in a single night. "Very well! Very well! I am in a hurry!" And he continued his way. But during the day he passed before the shop again. This time the happy joiner ran after him, and came up with him.

"I told you this morning I was cured, *Monsieur l'Abbé*, but I plainly saw you did not believe me. It is true, however, and you can prove it with your own eyes. The Blessed Virgin has saved me!"

Macary's tone excluded all idea of joking or untruth. The priest was seized with a secret terror, for the super-

natural had passed beside him, and he had failed to recognise it. "Is it possible!" he cried, turning pale.

They went into the nearest house, which happened to be that of Macary's sister, where, three days ago, the old joiner had asked the Abbé Coux to pray for him at the Rocks of Massabiella and bring him back some water of Lourdes. A crowd had collected in the street on hearing the conversation of Macary and the curate, and several persons went with them into Madame Bonafous' house. Macary made them all feel his restored legs, the places where the veins had stood out, where the ulcers had suppurated, and where the lumps had been.

"And now, *Monsieur l'Abbé!*" said the joiner, "now that the Blessed Virgin has cured my body, we must also heal the rest, and you shall be my doctor." . . .

The Divine hand which had removed his physical disease had also touched the joiner's heart, and François Macary was an altered man. The unbeliever, the swearer, the man who never opened his mouth but to utter some awful imprecation, rose up the following Sunday from the midst of the faithful, and accompanied by all his family, went to receive at the Holy Table the God he had so long blasphemed. Tears fell from his eyes, and a touching joy was visible on every face. If there is more joy in heaven over one sinner converted than over a hundred just men who need no conversion, the Celestial Father's felicity is surely re-echoed in the hearts of his children here on earth. All the congregation of the Cathedral of Saint Alain on that day rejoiced and were glad.

XI.

The news of this event soon spread in the town of Lavour and the surrounding neighbourhood, and created an immense sensation.

Macary went to see his three doctors. Nothing could equal their astonishment at finding him cured. The disease was notoriously incurable, it dated from over thirty years ago; no medical treatise had ever recounted a circumstance of the kind; . . . and yet Macary was there, before their eyes, without either ulcers or varicose veins. A power, unknown to science and superior to Nature, had removed them all. Of the numerous and enormous bunches of veins, and the great lumps that had deformed the leg, nothing remained except one little knot—the smallest—and that one reduced, flattened, and diminished to the usual proportions without any obstruction. The disease had entirely disappeared, and those slight traces of its presence were left simply to witness to past infirmities, as the dried bed of a torrent testifies to all eyes the ancient passage of the waters.

“Decidedly,” cried Doctor Ségur, after a minute examination, “*I can only discover some few traces of those enormous varicæ.*”

“Yes, indeed,” responded Doctor Rossignol, examining in his turn, “*the symptoms have suddenly disappeared,* and nothing remains of those great knots but this one little one, which is sensibly smaller.”

“And in which *there is not a sign of obstruction,*” observed Doctor Bernet, astounded. “What is especially striking, is that the bunches of varicose veins have en-

tirely disappeared, and in their place nothing can be felt but little cords, hard, void of blood and rolling under the finger. In each leg the vein has its proper volume and follows its proper course. Now we know that Macary suffered from a perpetual infirmity. All doctors are agreed on one point, namely, that varices not properly taken care of are incurable; that they cannot be cured by palliative treatment, still less do they cure spontaneously; on the contrary, they continue to get worse and worse. . . . And yet, this radical cure has been effected in a single night and under the influence of a simple application of compresses dipped in water of Lourdes."

"This case of spontaneous cure appears to me all the more surprising," declared Doctor Ségur, "*that the annals of Science make no mention of any fact of this nature.*"

"It must be admitted," concluded Doctor Bernet, "*that in fact, no author mentions any similar or analogous observation, and Science is powerless to explain such a cure. Thus, if even authentic witnesses had not proved certain details, affirmed by Macary, the fact of itself would still remain most extraordinary, and, to speak plainly, SUPERNATURAL.*"

Such was the *textual* verdict pronounced by the three eminent doctors, one after the other. It is from their *written* declarations that we have copied their positive and formal expressions. At the end of the volume (Note I. of the Appendix) we reproduce *in extenso*, as proofs, the three certificates of these members of the Faculty with their signatures, attested by the Mayor and the Sous-Prefect.

Adversaries of the supernatural always require

authentic proofs and certificates emanating from men of science. Here they have them.

XII.

Two months later, on the 18th of September, Macary took as ex-voto to the Grotto of Lourdes, his gaiters and bandages, those silent witnesses of his former ills now divinely cured. They can be seen there still, but little by little the inclemency of the changing seasons is deteriorating and destroying those touching relics, placed there to remind visitors of one of God's miracles.*

Beneath the shadow of the Rocks of Massabiella, those rocks sanctified by the presence of her who had so miraculously succoured and saved him, Macary's feelings were overwhelming. He describes them in a letter that we have before us.

"I fell on my knees," he writes, "and for ten minutes or more, my heart was in such a tumult of emotion, that I could not utter a word though I tried to pray.

* On this occasion we wish to express our regret that precautions are not taken to preserve ex-voto of this sort for the edification of the faithful. It would be desirable to enclose the more fragile amongst them in crystal cases, as treasures of price, and each might bear an inscription stating to what event, what date, and what miraculously cured person it relates ; so that, with the help of such an indication everyone might, on the one hand, verify the fact, and on the other, be able to read, if they chose, in the *Annals of Notre Dame de Lourdes*, or some other such publication, the detailed account of the miracle to which such and such an ex-voto bears witness. It would be the touchstone placed in everyone's hand ; it would be the stamp of the mint, the official guarantee, graved in a metal whose intrinsic value must otherwise remain unknown to the public. What inappreciable importance would not such authenticity give to that mass of anonymous documents ?

At last a flood of tears relieved me, and I found words in which to address a prayer of thanksgiving to the Mother of Mercy, whom I almost fancied I saw in reality. Never in my life shall I forget that moment. If our free-thinkers could taste such happiness as one feels in hours like those, they would soon understand the difference between our Faith and their doctrines."

XIII.

Words such as these reveal at once, that the change in Macary's mind was no less great than the improvement in his body. From that day his life passed between work—for he had recovered his strength, and prayer—for he had recovered his faith. As the persecutor Saul was overthrown on the road to Damascus, so the blasphemer Macary had been transformed by the grace of God.

His joy was great at being delivered from his infirmity, but we can confidently say, after having seen and heard him, that it was nothing compared with his happiness at being once more a Christian. The Gospel speaks of the joy of the Good Shepherd when He finds His lost sheep, but it tells us nothing of the feelings of the sheep itself when gently brought back to the fold, or of the prodigal son when embraced by his father, or of the sinner when reconciled with his God. The excellent François Macary experienced those feelings, that filial joy, that secret and unutterable felicity in all their plenitude.

His heart was henceforth as the heart of an apostle. He would have liked to convert the whole world, and

cause every member of the great human family to share in the knowledge and love of the Sovereign Truth. From the moment of his cure he never ceased to offer thanksgiving to God, and to witness publicly before men to the celestial favour of which he had been the object.

Every evening, after the labours of the day, he went and passed an hour in church, alone before the Blessed Sacrament. To those who came to see him he related his history ; to such as wrote to him he replied scrupulously by a clear, succinct and animated account of the great event of his life.

If by chance he read in some newspaper an attack on miracles, the worthy joiner left his plane, took up his pen and sent the editor a detailed account of what had happened to himself. Several of the letters which he thus wrote have been communicated to us, and we have drawn largely from them in our efforts to introduce into our own relation something of the fresh perfume of his frank straightforward language.

“ . . . From that moment I have worn nothing but stockings on my legs, like everybody else. I have never seen the least swelling nor felt the least pain, and I work every day from five in the morning till seven in the evening.”

“ These are the exact details of the marvel that it pleased Our Lady of Lourdes to accomplish in me, and that I forward to you on oath, requesting you to publish and proclaim them wherever you like. I shall be only too happy if I can hear that my letter to you has brought back some unbeliever to the right road ! As for me, who never prayed, I can assure you I make up for lost time, and never shall I cease to thank God and

the Blessed Virgin for having chosen me as a witness and a proof of their glory and goodness. Adieu. Please think of me in your prayers, and believe me your brother in Jesus Christ,

“FRANÇOIS MACARY.”

XIV.

In the following year, on the 24th of June, a procession of about a thousand Christians, men and women, priests and laymen, went singing hymns, along the road that leads to the Grotto of Lourdes. The pilgrims remembered that the Blessed Virgin had, in old times, delivered their city—once from the plague, in the fourteenth century, and a second time from an invasion in the sixteenth century—and a magnificent emblazoned banner bearing two dates recalling those ancestral traditions, was carried at the head of the procession. . . . But between those two dates of the past stood out, in large gold letters, a quite recent one—19th July, 1871, the date of the supernatural cure we have just related. On the other side of the banner was the inscription, *To the Immaculate Virgin, the grateful town of Lavour*. The man who carried this banner, token of the gratitude of a whole town, was François Macary. Every year from the time of his cure, he went to Lourdes on a pilgrimage of thanksgiving.

XV.

He made his usual pilgrimage to the sanctuary of his benefactress in 1875, at the beginning of October. We were then at Lourdes, and Macary came to see us. Never shall we forget his open, genial face.

"Ah sir!" he cried, "how much I have wished to know you. It was through your book that I found the way to my two cures." He called his conversion his second cure.

In saying these words, the worthy man opened his arms and gave us the friendly embrace and the brotherly kiss so common amongst the early Christians.

While listening to him talking, and examining his once diseased legs, we noted the peculiar character of his physical state. Since his miraculous cure, which had taken place four years previously, Macary had been preserved, not only from any return of his disease, but from every other kind of indisposition. It seemed to please the Divine Hand to deliver from any change in detail, the health of the man who had suffered for so long. He was thin, agile, vigorous, straight, and firm. His appearance was invulnerable. Subject to the law of death, he looked like a man inaccessible to the attacks of illness, and like a soldier in steel armour on whose breast a lance slips without leaving any trace. A violent shock may overthrow them, but no attack can harm them.

We begged him to sit at table with us and share our meal. And it was during this fraternal repast that he related his history with extraordinary animation and spirit, and an emotion that we all shared. The Curé Peyramale, the Abbé Pomian, Bernadette's catechist, the Abbé Peyret, Curate of Lourdes, at present Curé of Aubarède, and M. and Mme. Ernest Hello, were with us. We were all under the charm of his Christian, picturesque, and eloquent language.

In a corner of the dining-room my secretary was seated at his desk.

"What is that young man doing?" asked Macary, towards the end of the dinner.

"He is a short-hand writer. He can write as fast as anyone can speak, and he has taught and fixed on the paper every word that has left your lips."

"Well, there is not one to be scratched out. From the beginning to the end you have heard nothing but the truth."

He remained with us during his stay at Lourdes, and only left us two days later. I went with him to the station, and promised to go and see him the following month at Lavaur, on my way to Paris. I wanted to talk with him again, to get more thoroughly into the heart of his history and the history of his heart. . . . Alas! man proposes and God disposes.

XVI.

A fortnight after, on the 21st of October, 1875, there was general mourning in the town of Lavaur. An immense crowd followed to the cemetery the remains of the most popular and most esteemed workman of the place. François Macary had been suddenly carried off by the rupture of an aneurism. No suffering, no sickness, no uneasiness had preceded his sudden death. The man healed by the Blessed Virgin had not been ill; he had simply ceased to live in this world to enter into the life above. He died cured.

"Thus," writes a friendly pen, "Lazarus was resuscitated and died. Thus died in the same way, after a

certain number of years passed on earth, all those whose miraculous cures, by the hand of the Saviour Jesus, are related in the Gospel. But their restoration to health and life attested the power of the Lord; and when once that work was accomplished, God suffered them to die like other men, and to enter like them into the place of reward." *

That is the reason, good and pious Macary, why I could not see you again in this world, nor keep my promise of paying you a visit. Pray God that the engagement be only put off, and that one day, with all those whom I love, we may be united in the glory of the throne of God, at the feet of her, whose history, all unworthy as I am, I have had the supreme joy of writing, and whose powerful hand, to use your own language, has cured you twice.†

* E. Artus.

† The miraculous event which we have given in detail, is the subject of one of the painted glass-windows in the Basilica of Lourdes. The window is in the chapel of the Rosary, the seventh to the right on entering. François Macary is represented at the moment when he discovers his cure by the water of Lourdes. Beside him on the table is the book which revived his faith. At the top of the window Our Lady of Lourdes is represented shedding rays of grace on the workman. The wife of the joiner of Lavaur stands by, clasping her hands and thanking God.

MADemoisELLE DE FONTENAY.

THREE LETTERS SERVING AS PREFACE.

I.

To Monsieur Henri Lasserre.

AUTUN, 10th September, 1882.

MONSIEUR,

In consenting to the publicity you propose giving to the narrative you have communicated to me, I make, as you are aware, a very great sacrifice. It is more painful to me than I can say that things of so intimate a nature should be exposed to the universal gaze of the world.

But since it may be for the greater glory of the Blessed Virgin that her benefits be thus brought to light, I do not hesitate to surmount my repugnance, and I declare, as also do my family who sign this letter with me, that everything contained in this narrative is the exact truth.

I must add, however, that its pages contain certain

personal appreciations and friendly portraits which I should have wished, and still wish, to see suppressed.

JEANNE-MARIE DE FONTENAY,
Enfant de Marie.

E. DE FONTENAY.

M. DE FONTENAY,
née DE FROISSARD-BROISSIA.

JOSEPH DE FONTENAY, S.J.

HENRY DE FONTENAY.

II.

Answer to the preceding Letter.

LES BRETOUX, 12th September, 1882.

MADemoisELLE,

The glory of the Blessed Virgin does not allow me, as you have understood yourself, to leave in darkness and under a bushel the remarkable event of which, some time ago, I was providentially a witness at the Crypt of Lourdes. Doubtless it was accomplished in a certain measure for your own personal advantage; but infinitely more, believe me, for the good of souls, and the edification of Christians. As for my personal appreciations and the colouring of my portraits, I cannot, alas! even to avoid giving you some little pain, abdicate the just rights of History. So you must forgive me for publishing these pages exactly as I have written them, in all sincerity of thought and in all uprightness of intention.

Pray to Our Lady of Lourdes that it may please her to bless this narrative, and use it to spread Faith, Hope, and Charity in all hearts.

HENRI LASSERRE.

III.

To Monsieur Henri Lasserre.

LOURDES, 16th September, 1882.

MONSIEUR,

I have just read your narrative. The history you relate, with which I have been personally mixed up, and of which I have known every detail for a long time past, could not possibly be chronicled with more respectful exactness. I am happy to add my testimony to that of the family de Fontenay.

DE MUSY,
Curé de Chagny.

MADemoiselle DE FONTENAY.

I.

In 1865, Mlle. Jeanne was eighteen. Intelligent in mind, enthusiastic in heart, and alert and active in body, she came and went, hither and thither, carried away by the joyous fever of youth just waking up to life, and unwilling to lose anything of the dazzling spectacle that nature presents to that privileged age. Full of health and strength, with sensitive nerves capable of deep feeling, and muscles of steel invulnerable to fatigue, she loved the open-air life of the country, and braved with equal impunity the scorching rays of the summer sun, or the piercing blasts of the wintry wind ; indeed, not even the frost and snow of winter could check her excursions and exploring expeditions through the fields, the pastures, and the woods, that adorn the banks of the Meurthe.

Providence had endowed her with an engaging grace of person, more attractive far than mere beauty. The firm, clear lines of her face, her large black eyes, her long silky hair rolled round her head in a coronet, her supple form and graceful walk, gave to her whole person a captivating harmony, that charmed the mind and fixed itself in the memory. She had been brought up at the convent of the Sacred Heart of Nancy, by pious

and highly educated teachers, and had received at their hands a complete education according to the world, and a perfect education according to the Church. Her heart and mind had been formed to love all that was great and noble, good and true, and in her eyes, the type of all greatness, goodness, beauty, and truth, after Our Lord Jesus Christ and above every other creature, was the Blessed and Immaculate Virgin, towards whom she cherished an ardent devotion. She was proud to possess among her baptismal names that of the Queen of Heaven, and to have been consecrated to that Mother of mothers. She always signed her name thus:—“Jeanne Marie, *Enfant de Marie*”.

Her father was of noble race, and occupied an important position in a high-class manufacture that touches on the confines of art, and is almost an art of itself. M. de Fontenay was the Director of the celebrated Glass-works of Baccarat. The workmen who had watched Jeanne from her cradle, and seen her try her first steps on the lawns of the manufactory, now beheld her sometimes running and playing in the park, like a gazelle, sometimes following the road leading to the town with a parcel under her arm. Whither was she going thus mysteriously laden? Accompanied by her mother or a Sister of Charity, she was directing her steps to the dwellings of the poor and sick, taking necessities or even acceptable superfluities, to those of whom Jesus Christ has said: “Amen, I say to you, as you did it to one of these my least brethren you did it to Me”. And that was why she was beloved by the whole country-side. She attributed to the Almighty all the splendours of the creation, thanked Him for the

good things she enjoyed, accepted His gifts with gratitude, and expanded innocently, like a fair flower, in the exuberant delight of life. Fortune spread its softest carpet before her, and scattered its most luxuriant flowers on her path. She was in the dawn and spring-time of her existence, and birds of Paradise sang their morning song in the garden of her heart. Within and without all was content and rejoicing. To-day, Happiness; to-morrow, Hope. The sky was pure, and to Jeanne's delighted eyes the future revealed only smiling landscapes and cloudless horizons. Happiness, health, riches, youth, Christian belief, and human science: Jeanne possessed them all. Could anything be wanting in her life? Nothing.

Her father, M. de Fontenay, a man whose merit was only equalled by his modesty, was a distinguished chemist, and the art of glass-making was indebted to him for some remarkable improvements. At the International Exhibition, of 1867, the articles in glass, incomparable marvels of beauty, that had been manufactured under his directions were universally admired.*

* The illustrious chemist Dumas speaks of him thus: "Monsieur de Fontenay," he says, "had hardly finished his education *when he transformed the manufacture of crystal* by introducing into France the art of making coloured glass, painted or ornamented. This art has developed, and become a source of immense commerce to our country".—"The first manufacture of coloured glass," says M. Emile Muller, "is due to M. de Fontenay, who has gloriously opened the way to our glass-making engineers by the success of the Glass Works of Baccarat. They have been for the last thirty years embodied in their Director, to whom we are also indebted for some interesting studies on *liqueous combustibles*."—(Speeches of MM. Dumas and Muller on the 21st of June, 1879, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the foundation of the School of Arts and Manufactures, presided over by the Minister of Agriculture and Commerce.)

But he was something more and better than a scientific man ; he was a man of Faith and Charity.

The working population of Baccarat were always sure of finding in their paternal Director, help and protection in time of need. The distinguished glass-maker was beloved and revered by the worthy people whom he had guided for more than a quarter of a century in the glorious path of labour, and whom he led also, by the great teaching of example, in the path of religious observance ; realizing in his own person, the type, alas ! too rare in our days, of the Christian man of business. He was seconded in his task by a wife in every way worthy of him. The blessing of God had descended on their house. Five children were born of M. de Fontenay's marriage with Mlle. Marthe de Froissard-Broissia, two of whom, Antoine and Marthe, had died young. The three others who remained were the joy and delight of their parents. The eldest son, Henry, followed in his father's footsteps, and loved to investigate, surrounded by retorts and alembics, the fruitful secrets hidden by the Creator in the constitution of bodies. His brother Joseph, who at that time was about ten or twelve years of age, was of an ardent nature, impulsive, full of life and spirits—always on fire, but a fire whose pure flame rose straight to heaven, and was never turned earthward by any evil wind.—He had, so to speak, all the impetuosity of innocence. The elder was the ripening fruit, the younger the bud, full of sap and ready to break forth into blossom. Between the two, Jeanne shone a fair spring flower bright and perfumed. . . . Was anything wanting in this family ? Nothing.

We are mistaken.—Something was wanting: Misfortune.

In making the round of the vast magazines of Baccarat, the eye contemplates at every instant the most brilliant specimens of ancient and modern glass-making. Here and there, on magnificent vases of muslin-crystal ornamented with engravings of flowers and artistic arabesques, noble names, ancient coats of arms and illustrious mottoes were inscribed. On all sides shone great lustres glittering with countless drops and pendants, urns, goblets, chandeliers and girandoles glowing with warm colour and rainbow hues. . . . Alas! alas! was not this the place in which to remember with fear and trembling old Corneille's terrible and melancholy verse:

“Toute cette félicité,
Sujette à l'instabilité
En moins que rien tombe à terre,
Et comme elle a l'éclat du verre,
Elle en a la fragilité!” *

II.

One day that the ladies were out driving, either through the horses running away or the inexperience of the coachman, Jeanne had a narrow escape from death. A sudden and violent shock threw her out of the carriage, which fell heavily upon her, crushing her beneath its weight.

* “All our felicity,
Subject to instability,
Falls to the ground, alas!
And possessing the brilliance of glass,
Has also its fragility!”

No limbs were broken, but the accident, which a little later on was aggravated by a fall from a horse, had caused a serious shock to the young girl's organisation, the consequences of which, as time passed on, became far more disastrous than any fracture could have been.

Those consequences, however, did not manifest themselves immediately. Although a little delicate, Jeanne appeared, after a certain time, sufficiently recovered to be permitted to realise in the summer of 1867 the favourite dream of her childhood, and pass two months in the capital of the Christian world. There she saw the Pope, Pius the Ninth, and brought back with her, as a precious remembrance of her pious journey, a rosary that the Holy Father had held in his hand during the interview, and which never left her from that time.

A circumstance of that journey had particularly impressed itself on Jeanne's memory. As she and her mother were walking one day in the outskirts of Rome, they perceived, a few steps before them, the august successor of the Prince of the Apostles. He also had wandered in that direction in search of fresh air and solitude. At that moment a few drops of rain began to fall, and the Pope re-entered his carriage. Jeanne ran and threw herself at his feet.

"Holy Father, bless me!"

The Vicar of Jesus Christ laid his venerable hands on the young girl's head.

"I bless you," he said.

Then, fixing on her his soft and penetrating eyes, he added: "And the Blessed Virgin will bless you also".

That pilgrimage to Rome, that poetic journey across

the picturesque plains which border the Appenines, the stay in the Eternal City, the memorable audience at the Vatican, and the filial prostration at the feet of the Sovereign Pontiff, composed the supreme *fête* of her youth.

Dark shadows were about to descend on that promising dawn, and enduring trials to succeed to fleeting joys.

III.

From the time of her return to France, the latent consequences of Jeanne's two previous falls began to assume a more marked and threatening character, and her health was seriously affected. She became subject to violent attacks of pain, and felt within herself that something in her organisation was radically wrong.

The effects of the disease, as so often happens, soon manifested itself in her legs; they became gradually weaker and weaker. As much as she had once loved movement and activity, so much she was now apprehensive of the least fatigue and anxious for repose. She hardly ever went out, for the shortest walk overwhelmed her with weariness, and she was obliged to rest after it in an arm-chair or on a sofa. Dark rings encircled her eyes, which gradually assumed that painful brilliancy peculiar to fever and sleeplessness.

Such was her state when, from the very beginning of the war, the Prussians over-ran Baccarat.

It is not our intention to retrace the sombre scenes, the terrors and the suspense of those terrible hours. But it is easy to imagine what the poor girl must have felt at the sight of the German officers and soldiers,

making themselves masters of the house, and filling it from morning till night with the tumult of their cries and oaths, the suffocating atmosphere of their pipes and the sinister clanking of their arms.

Although the room where Jeanne was so often detained in bed was guarded by her mother as a sanctuary of suffering, the brutal curiosity of the invaders did not always respect its threshold; and more than once the poor girl was terrified by her door half-opening and a head covered with an iron-pointed helmet intruding itself to glance with insolent inquisition round the room. In addition to that, she was ever in constant agonies of terror and alarm, for whenever a *franc-tireur* was seen in the neighbourhood the Prussians threatened to set fire to the Manufactories and shoot the Director.

M. de Fontenay's admirable energy never once forsook him in the midst of so many perils; he thought of his workmen as much as of his family—the father watched over all and everyone.

The eldest son Henry had, from the commencement of the national disasters, engaged as volunteer, and acquitted himself bravely in the decimated ranks of our armies. He was struck by a Prussian ball and obliged to undergo the amputation of one of his fingers. . . . What sorrow and bitter grief in that once calm and happy home! By the end of the war Jeanne's condition had become seriously worse. Her weary limbs only found a little relief, or rather only escaped absolute suffering, when stretched on a sofa covered with cushions and pillows. There she passed long days, sometimes reading, sometimes with eyes fixed on space and thoughts lost in sad reflections of which God alone

knew the secret!—sometimes with clasped hands imploring assistance and courage of the Sovereign Consoler.

Amongst the works she glanced at or read to help to pass the time was one that, for about a week, seemed to pre-occupy her mind and make her thoughtful. The different chapters of *OUR LADY OF LOURDES* (such was the title of the volume) treated, in fact, of divine marvels and extraordinary cures accomplished in our own days at the foot of the Pyrenees, without any other help than prayer and the direct intervention of the Blessed Virgin. She imagined that it would be ambitious to aspire to a miracle, such celestial favours, according to her ideas, being granted only to very saintly persons; but the thought that she might be taken to Lourdes presented itself to her mind still absorbed with the narrative she had just read, and thrilled her with a sort of vague hope, while she passed through her feverish fingers the rosary given her by Pius the Ninth.

But Jeanne, like a fragile and flexible flower which the breeze inclines from side to side according to its varying caprice, soon turned her reveries in another direction and thought no more of that fugitive impression.

IV.

Madame de Fontenay was a most devoted mother, and her daughter's cruel disease was her constant anxiety, and her continual preoccupation. It was she, and she alone, who filled the post of sick nurse, and from her hand only did Jeanne receive the attentions her state required, for she would yield to no stranger the dear but cruel privilege of waiting on her child.

She was on foot instantly at every call, every moan, every complaint even unconscious, always near Jeanne during the day, and sleeping beside her bed at night the light watchful sleep of vigilance—that sleep so unknown to heavy selfishness, and so natural to anxious love.

It will easily be understood that in consequence of this state of things, the family isolated themselves from the outside world, and kept to themselves a trouble that nothing could alleviate, neither the common-place civilities of the indifferent, nor even the sympathy of friendship. And, indeed, there are some troubles which are only aggravated by any attempt at consolation.

We must add that the poor mother courted retirement all the more, because she was preoccupied perhaps excessively by the thousand rumours spread by the curious, and she objected, above all things, to her daughter being looked upon as a confirmed invalid. She feared also that the sight of her prolonged weakness might bring to some inadvertent lips the fatal word “consumption,” wherefore she was urgent that in public Jeanne should struggle against her feelings at any cost.

The young girl, endowed with great strength of mind, constrained herself, therefore, whenever visitors called, to sit up in an easy chair, and take an animated part in the conversation, hiding her sufferings as well as she could, and, by a last effort accompanying her friends to the door. But when they were gone, she threw herself on her bed writhing in agonies of acute pain, occasioned by the momentary violence she had imposed on nature.

Madame de Fontenay, who was naturally extremely

open and unreserved, maintained on this sore place in her heart an absolute silence. When anyone enquired after her daughter, she invariably replied :

“Oh ! Jeanne is pretty well, her little indisposition is natural to her time of life, and will soon disappear.”

V.

But if they were thus careful to throw a veil—a transparent one at best—over their secret trouble, on the other hand they neglected no means likely to restore health to the invalid. They knocked at every door, tried mineral waters, and exhausted the resources of the druggists. Madame de Fontenay would have liked to have the advice of all the doctors in the world for her beloved child, and would have tried every known remedy to save her.

Alas ! “Human science,” as Montaigne says, “is wavering and changeable, malleable and pliable to every wind of doctrine”. They naturally began by consulting the doctor of Baccarat, Doctor Mangin, who knew Jeanne’s constitution, and had observed her illness from its origin. He was a man of great experience, sure diagnostic, and devotedly attached to the family. He displayed all his talent, his erudition, his intellect, in attempting to cure Jeanne—he had called to the help of science the powerful action of natural springs, and had sent the sick girl to Aix-les-Bains, for two successive seasons—in 1869 and 1870. But the resources of traditional and classical medicine had been of no avail against the tenacity of the disease and its rapid progress.

By the advice of M. d'Hotelans, one of her uncles who lived at Besançon, Madame de Fontenay applied to Doctor Labruno, a learned practitioner of that town.

Doctor Labruno shook his head while listening to the history of the treatment that had been followed, and then raised it, not without some conscious pride, to pronounce his opinion :

"My colleague of Baccarat has been following the old routine. We will leave it, and save the young lady by homeopathy. No more pills! Globules instead. No more mixtures! Dilutions in their place."

The new trial lasted some weeks ; but globules and dilutions were not more efficacious than pills and mixtures had been. Disappointed but not discouraged by this new failure, the mother and daughter consulted a celebrity of Lorraine, Doctor Schustemberg of the Faculty of Strasbourg.

"How difficult it is to keep in the right path," cried he. "Allopathy has deviated to the right, homeopathy has turned to the left. *In medio stat virtus*. Mademoiselle has a rheumatic constitution, and is suffering from pronounced anemy. We must employ the universal tonic, the all-powerful reviver: cold water! Sudden immersions, vigorous jets, and icy douches. Hydropathy will be the saving of her."

The hydropathic treatment was adopted.

Jeanne submitted to a rigorous application of it at the great establishment of La Hoube, in the duchy of Baden, but that energetic therapeutic method produced no serious result.

It was about this time that M. de Fontenay retired on a pension, after having directed the Glass Works of

Baccarat for thirty-two years. He returned and settled in his native town of Autun.

At Autun lived Dr. Lagoutte, who was much attached to the family. He was consulted. After thoroughly examining the previous treatments, and discovering besides a bronchial affection, he formally condemned the ideas of his predecessor.

"What you want," he said, "is not cold water, but warm water. Go back of a season to Aix-les-Bains." . . .

At Aix-les-Bains, Doctor l'Espines advised a surgical treatment, that the sick girl could not bring herself to consent to. . . .

"Ob! Who will reveal the secret of how to cure her!" thought the poor distracted mother, as she had recourse successively to every means, listened eagerly to all opinions, and besought advice from every source. She remembered then a famous doctor of the south of France who had exhibited remarkable skill when he attended her son Henry, at the time of the amputation of his finger, which operation had been performed under considerable difficulties. He lived at Lyons, and thither Madame de Fontenay took her daughter.

Life was gradually diminishing in her bloodless and exhausted veins. Jeanne was always cold.

"We must have a perfectly pure atmosphere and a perpetual summer to restore her congealed blood and fortify her shattered health. It is no use plunging her in hot or cold water. She should bathe in the rays of the sun. You must go to Cannes."

Thus spoke Doctor Bouchacourt.

Immediately Madame de Fontenay and her daughter pitched their wandering tent on the warm slopes of

the incomparable shores that border the Gulf of Napoli.

Sheltered on all sides, from the North and South winds, by the ranges of the Alps, or the mountains of the Estérel, poor Jeanne warmed her frozen blood in the sun. The cosmopolitan population of Cannes noticed the young invalid painfully dragging herself along on her mother's arm, and seeming to measure with anxious eye the few steps that intervened between her and the chair or bench on which she would find a little repose after her efforts, and where she was no sooner seated, than her maid hastened to wrap her in the folds of warm shawls and thick rugs.

Six years had passed since the manifestation of the weakness and morbid crises which in 1867 had marked the first phases of the disease; they were then at the beginning of 1873. It had been a long period of sufferings endured and hopes deceived. From year to year, and from treatment to treatment, the young girl's constitution had finished by being almost completely ruined.

It would be well to mention here, as an explanation of the numerous uncertainties and contradictions in the doctors' opinions, that through her absolute ignorance of the physiological importance of certain details, Jeanne, in consulting the men of science, had contented herself with speaking only of such things as appeared grave to her, and remained silent on the subject of her internal sufferings which she considered as without importance.

"The pains I endure, and the uncomfortable feelings I have," she thought, "are peculiar to my constitution. They make me suffer, but to suffering I can oppose resignation. . . . If only I could be cured of this mortal

weakness that paralyses me, and if I could walk again, the rest would be a little trial that I might offer to God."

And in this manner, without knowing or intending it, she misled the doctors, by entirely concealing, or by lightly passing over the violent sufferings and distressing sensations she experienced in those parts of her body that had been crushed beneath the weight of the overturned carriage.

However praiseworthy and comprehensible may be the motives of Jeanne's reserve, we are of opinion that a clearer understanding of the necessities and laws of existence might have determined her from the beginning to conceal nothing. Doctors are like confessors: they must know all.—But notwithstanding her reticence, certain of them had suspected that the roots of her disease lay in some organic injury, some hidden evil.

VI.

Towards the end of January, 1873, Jeanne had become so much worse that it was impossible for her to stand upright or make a single step. About this time also, the excruciating inward pains that she suffered increased so much in intensity that her friends were forced, at last, to open their eyes to the gravity of the symptoms. They sent for Dr. Buttura, who saw Jeanne in one of these attacks. She writhed screaming in agony, and when the attack was over, she was persuaded to reveal its nature.

The doctor took the mother aside and spoke openly. "It is a complicated case which cannot be resolved either by pills or globules, or cold water or warm water,

or sunshine. Her state of health proceeds from an internal cause. Dr. d'Espine of Aix was right, and however trying it may be, you must have recourse to the surgeon. If Mademoiselle was a daughter of mine, I should not hesitate for a moment to call in an experienced specialist. Now, there is a celebrated English doctor staying in the neighbouring town of Mentone. You had better see him at once, and without losing a moment of time, for it has already been left far too long."

The poor girl therefore resigned herself to the surgical care of Dr. Bennet, and passed ten or twelve weeks in bed, enduring the gradual cauterizations of the Dupuytren of the other side the Channel.

But however clever he might be, the English practitioner only succeeded in making her suffer scientifically, and came no nearer a cure than his predecessors had done.

Sometimes she fell into a state of nervous exasperation before or after the doctor's visit. Her delicacy rebelled against the nature of the treatment that her mother's entreaties and her own faith in human science made it her duty to follow. She was generally extremely docile with doctors, properly so called, and willingly accepted their prescriptions, but her whole soul revolted with horror against the pitiless hands of the surgeon. Therefore, after enduring everything for three months without any result, her aversion and repugnance became insurmountable, and she was on the point of absolutely refusing to continue the treatment when Dr. Bennet was called away to England, and thus it was temporarily suspended.

VII.

Informed of the situation and justly alarmed, M. de Fontenay, who was then at Autun, hastened to join his wife and daughter. Notwithstanding so many useless trials and repeated failures, the father and mother still clung with tenacious credulity to their belief in the power of Medicine. Hanging over their child's bed, they encouraged her to overcome her repugnance.

"If not for yourself, dear child, do at least try for our sakes." . . .

Jeanne, however, in her long hours of sleeplessness, had recalled to mind a book she had read years ago, and the current of her thoughts brought back to her recollection and revived in her heart a once fugitive impression.

"Father," she said, "I will submit to all the treatments you like—but on condition that before beginning a single one you will let me go to Lourdes."

Her parents were too sincerely Christian to oppose the least resistance to their child's wish, but still they hardly dared hope for a divine intervention in their troubles; and, in any case, it was considered desirable to ask the advice of an eminent ecclesiastic, Mgr. Caverot, then Bishop of Saint-Dié, and now Cardinal-Archbishop of Lyons. He had known the family for many years, and wrote them the following letter, which we copy without comment. It is sufficiently clear in itself, and shows, by the words printed in italics, how grave the situation was.

BISHOP'S PALACE, ST. DIÉ, 25th April, 1884.

MY VERY DEAR CHILD,—What you tell me of the state to which God has permitted you to be reduced completely confirms the appreciation contained in the letter I have had the honour of writing to your mother. If you were actually staying at Lourdes, doubtless you might be allowed to be taken to the church there. *But to undertake the journey from Cannes to Lourdes in the situation you are in would be, unless you had a direct order or revelation from God, a signal act of folly.*

But, my child, you will do well to consult your doctor. If he declares that the journey would not involve *any grave consequences* for you, my objections fall of themselves, for I am not a man of science. If I were, I should not change my opinion.

You must endeavour to see in all this, my child, *the will of God, and learn, if necessary, to make Him the sacrifice of your own.* Besides, nothing prevents your promising to make the pilgrimage *if you recover.* The Blessed Virgin has no difficulty in performing miracles at a distance, and Our Lady of Lourdes accomplishes many such every day.

Offer my homage of respect, etc. . . .

L. M., Bishop of Saint Dié.

Following the prelate's advice, the doctor was consulted, and the man of science spoke literally in the same terms as his lordship.

"It would be *a signal act of folly* to undertake the journey under such circumstances." . . .

Dr. Buttura, however, who was as experienced as he was learned, had often remarked during his long practice how hard and painful the sick find it to give up a pet idea, a plan conceived, a project that their hearts are set on. In the natural course of things the sick are petted up like spoiled children, and are often subject to terrible fits of obstinacy that yield to no consideration, and cannot be opposed without danger. The tender care of those about them has often been, for years,

devoted to sparing them every little annoyance and watching their slightest wishes in order to gratify them, so that, little by little, they have got accustomed to an absolute compliance in everything; and when that redoubtable habit is acquired, it becomes almost impossible to act in opposition to their desires. A formal refusal to accede to a wish turns that wish into an imperious necessity, especially with women: they become low-spirited, lose their appetite and their sleep, and are subject to feverishness. What is to be done in such a case? Yield, yield always, whatever may be the consequences. This was certainly not Jeanne's case; but Dr. Buttura, perhaps, was less sure of that than we are, for he added:

"Yes, to undertake such a journey under such circumstances would be *a signal act of folly*. . . . Still, *considering the intense desire of the patient to go*, it would perhaps be less dangerous to let her commit the folly than to prevent her."

VIII.

Jeanne pleased herself by distorting this sentence into what she called "the doctor's consent". Nevertheless, both she and her mother needed no small share of courage to set off on their journey, and they drove to the station in fear and trembling. But thanks to the ingenious inventions by which a railway car can be turned into a bedroom, and a seat into a sofa or a couch, the sick girl arrived safely at Lourdes the 21st May, 1873, after a journey of two hundred and fifty leagues. The 21st of May in that year was the eve of the Ascension. M. de Fontenay, her father, left Cannes at the

same time to return to Autun, where he was one of the organisers of the diocesan pilgrimage which was to start for Paray-le-Monial the 5th of June; he had assumed the difficult and fatiguing charge in the hope of increasing by his good work the chances—so uncertain, alas!—that his daughter might have of recovering her health at the Grotto of Lourdes.

Jeanne had great faith in miracles, as was proved by her taking such a long and difficult journey in quest of one. But it must be added, in all truth and sincerity, according to our own personal impression,—it was not the faith that transports mountains.

Jeanne's faith, like her mother's, bordered on that vague sort of hope, obstinate in its efforts and yet never sure of itself, that some sick persons encourage and cherish—as much in the natural as in the supernatural order of things—in all that seems to them to contain the least chance of help or safety. Jeanne believed and believed not: she would and would not. "I had no faith that I should be cured," she said, "and I should add that some secret inward feeling prevented my asking it with all my heart." She hesitated, and like all hesitating natures she thought to reconcile everything by taking a middle course and contenting herself with what might be called a half-request for a half-cure.

"Holy Mother, at least permit that I may walk while I am near you!" And the young girl, ignorant of what she was doing and unaccustomed to sound the depths of her heart, could not understand that this timidity in her prayer was the worm at the heart of a ripe fruit: doubt in the heart of faith; she could not see that it was the contrary of what our Lord had taught when

He cried, in the days of old:—*Confidite!* “Have faith!” *Nolite timere!* “Fear not!”

IX.

Madame de Fontenay and her daughter remembered the important part taken by the Curé Peyramale in the events that marked the period of the Apparitions of Our Lady of Lourdes, and they were inspired with the excellent idea of choosing him for their confessor and director. He was a man who, in matters of faith, possessed superabundantly whatever was wanting in others; and was able to make up all deficiencies without impoverishing his treasure. He borrowed the expressions of the Divine Master to reassure our two travellers and raise their courage. “*Si potes credere, omnia possible sunt credenti*: If you believe, all things are possible to those who believe! . . . *Omnia quaecumque petieritis in oratione, credentes, accipietis*: Whatever you ask for believing, you shall receive!” And like the Israelite spoken of in the Gospel, they cried: “We believe! We believe!” But they did not take into account their secret misgivings, and so forgot to add humbly: “Help our unbelief!”

The Servant of Mary helped them nevertheless, and little by little, during the course of a Noveno to Our Lady of Lourdes, Jeanne’s strength came gradually back. One day she took five or six steps. The next day she went forty. The day after that she walked pretty easily; and at last, after the Noveno, on the 3rd of June, which was the double anniversary of her own and Bernadette’s first communion, she went on foot

with the other pilgrims to the Chapel and the Grotto, followed the processions of Ariège and Pontacq, and returned to the town. At every step she took, Jeanne's surprise increased. Even after such long walks she felt not the least fatigue. . . . She then went with her mother to visit the Curé of Lourdes.

X.

It appears to us opportune, before going on with our narrative, to recall a scene of the New Testament, and to insert here for the greater edification of the reader, a page of the Sacred Book :

And forthwith Jesus obliged his disciples to go up into the boat and to go before him over the water till he dismissed the people.

And having dismissed the multitude, he went up into a mountain alone to pray. And when it was evening he was there alone.

But the boat in the midst of the sea was tossed with the waves ; for the wind was contrary.

And in the fourth watch of the night, he came to them walking upon the sea.

And they seeing him walking upon the sea were troubled saying : It is an apparition. And they cried out for fear.

And immediately Jesus spoke to them saying : Be of good heart : It is I. Fear ye not.

And Peter making answer said : Lord, if it be thou bid me come to thee upon the waters.

And he said "Come". And Peter going down out of the boat walked upon the water to come to Jesus.

But seeing the wind strong he was afraid : and when he began to sink he cried out saying : Lord, save me.

And immediately Jesus stretching forth his hand took hold of him and said to him : "O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt?"

And when they were come up into the boat the wind ceased.

And they that were in the boat came and adored him saying :
Indeed thou art the Son of God.

XI.

The Curé Peyramale was greatly rejoiced to see the young girl able to walk. However used he might be to such sights, his eyes always filled with happy tears at each new grace accorded by Our Lady of Lourdes to the sick and suffering. "Glory to God and Our Blessed Lady! my dear child," he cried. "You are delivered from your seven years of pain and infirmity!"

"But, *Monsieur le Curé*, I feel no proof in myself of being cured."

The Abbé Peyramale looked at her in boundless astonishment.

"What! when you arrived at Lourdes last week, you were stretched motionless on your bed, powerless to stand or even sit up; you were carried about from place to place; and now, to-day, after having walked to the Grotto and back; after having followed the procession from beginning to end; after returning in haste to come and see me; after, in short, striding about like a rural postman and climbing the steep paths like an antelope, you come and ask if you are cured?"

"Yes, but" . . .

"Yes, but what? Are you tired?"

"Not more than a person in good health."

"Do you experience any difficulty in walking?"

"None whatever."

"Are you in any pain?"

"No."

"Well then! if you feel no pain, and no difficulty in walking, if you experience no weariness after the distance you have gone, how can you possibly suppose that you are not cured?"

"But I am not in my usual state.—I miss something."

"I should think you do! You miss your illness. . . You have been used to it for so long that it leaves a blank."

"Yes, but I have not felt what I expected and what evidently one ought to feel when the Blessed Virgin intervenes to work a miracle. No sudden shock, no secret thrill, no illumination of the soul.—None of all those things have happened. I walk like everybody else, it is true. I suffer no inconvenience, I am not tired; but I have never felt anything to indicate the exact moment when my organs were restored to their place, and I cannot persuade myself that I am cured."

"Come! Come! It is your head that is not in its place, and your faith that wavers. You doubt, in the face of a miracle, my child, as Simon Peter doubted when at the Saviour's call he walked on a sheet of water as if it were dry land. You must react energetically against this temptation which often assails the miraculously cured, and not fall into the trap set for you by the perfidious enemy of mankind."

That day, which was the Tuesday of Pentecost, the spirit of the Holy Ghost seemed to breathe through the lips of the Servant of Our Lady of Lourdes. He added: "Start for Paray-le-Monial to-morrow; M. de Fontenay will be there on Thursday with the Pilgrimage of your Diocese. And there, with all your family and your

friends from Autun, you will thank Our Lord Jesus Christ on your knees for the supernatural cure that His Holy Mother has granted you here." . . .

Madame de Fontenay and her daughter yielded completely to the influence of his persuasive eloquence, which had the effect of driving away all hesitation and trouble from their hearts, as the wind dissipates the clouds and mists of the morning.

XII.

On leaving the Presbytery, the mother and daughter talked of the man of God.

"That priest has the soul of an apostle," they said; "did not our heart burn within us while he was talking?"

Christian tradition reports that Simon Peter, son of Jonas, had no direct descendants except his only daughter, Saint Petronilla. Some learned ones, indeed, pretend that even she was only his spiritual daughter. But his indirect descendants are very numerous. Madame de Fontenay and her daughter belonged, doubtless, to that ancient race, and they were also, we believe, distantly related to the Apostle Thomas.

So when they got back to their hotel, and were busy with the preparations for their departure, they began to think, and their courage began to diminish.

Although Madame de Fontenay saw her beloved daughter walking, moving, busily attending to the packing, she was still, from excess of maternal solicitude, in a state of alarm. She could not get used to being without fear. After having trembled so often

before her child's cruel disease, she trembled now before the health so miraculously but so recently recovered. Such an extraordinary thing seemed to her from its very suddenness to be without that foundation or that solidity which is assured by the slow progress of an ordinary convalescence. On her side, Jeanne, although cured, would have liked to see herself stronger. The stones of the road were hard to her feet, unaccustomed for so many years to walking; when she saw herself in the glass she was frightened at the paleness of her face. In short, while they thanked God for the miraculous favour bestowed upon them, they became more and more inclined to express their gratitude in a manner notably different to the one recommended by the *Curé* of the Apparitions.

"What a signal benefit Our Lady of Lourdes has granted us; and who would have dared to hope it? . . . How grateful we ought to be! But the Blessed Virgin expects us to be prudent. Is not Prudence the virtue of the wise? Let us be careful, then, not to fall into the opposite extreme, which would be sinful, nor rush presumptuously into some thoughtless course. Our Lady of Lourdes evidently looks to us to help her in her work of grace. Under existing circumstances, the best means to co-operate in it would be to resort to the natural resources discovered by science. Instead, then, of exposing ourselves by blameable temerity to the fatigues of Paray-le-Monial, would it not be wiser to start for Aix-les-Bains? The waters are very strengthening, and will help and consolidate the miracle."

So, settling this admirable project in their minds, the ladies strapped up their trunks and portmanteaus, and

prepared to start for Aix by the first train in the morning.

But at dawn the next day, when Jeanne tried to rise, she could neither stand nor make the least movement with her legs and feet. The unfortunate young girl had suddenly fallen back into her former state.

Her cry of horror at this frightful awakening may be easily imagined. To obtain the benefit of a cure and lose it again ! To have had, as it were, a miracle in her possession, to have been invested for an instant with the plenitude of health, and then to see it suddenly disappear like an Eastern mirage ! The despair of Jeanne and her mother, in real life, must have equalled the fabled despair of Sisyphus at the fatal moment when the rock rolled with such difficulty to the top of the mountain, fell headlong down again to the bottom of the ravine.

And yet, notwithstanding their clear good sense, they neither of them understood the meaning of this sudden relapse. A veil was over their eyes, or rather their eyes were directed away from the truth. The clearest-sighted people can only see what they look at, and are blind to the horizon that stretches out behind them.

"I am as ill as I was before, and out of reach of a doctor !" cried Jeanne. . . . "Ah ! how right I was ! No, no ! I was not cured ! . . . Let us start for Aix at once !"

Lourdes had become intolerable to her. The ringing of the church bells, the sound of the hymns chanted by the processions that passed under her window, irritated and increased her sufferings.

The Curé of Lourdes met the carriage which was taking Jeanne to the station.

"The blessing of Our Lady of Lourdes go with you! You are starting for Paray?" . . .

"No, *Monsieur le Curé*," said the mother; "we are going to Aix-les-Bains. Jeanne has had a relapse."

And she told him the events of the morning. . . .

The servant of Our Lady of Lourdes listened thoughtfully, and the words of the Saviour to Simon Peter when he was sinking, came of themselves to his lips:

"*Quid dubitasti, modicæ fidei?* Why did you doubt, women of little faith?"

However, in spite of his sanctity the Curé Peyramale had not the gift of miracles: he could not cure Jeanne of her illness, as Jesus, by extending His hand, had saved the chief of the Apostles.

He looked long and anxiously after the unfortunate girl, as the carriage whirled rapidly towards the station; and he prayed for her with his whole heart.

"O, Our Lady of Lourdes!" he implored, "let this be only a trial, and do not repent of your gifts."

The superior of the little Seminary of Autun, the Abbé Duchène, Jeanne's spiritual director, went on a pilgrimage to Lourdes some little time after. The Curé Peyramale then explained the relapse to him in these words:

"Both mother and daughter were wanting in faith. The disease will only get worse and worse, since they prefer the waters of Aix to the waters of Lourdes."

XIII.

Disappointed and saddened, Madame de Fontenay and her daughter resumed their wandering life, and prepared to recommence their groping perigrinations after the lost health, taking their chance with medical consultations, and the contradictory opinions of human science.

The further they got from the city of Mary, the worse Jeanne felt herself. She had a violent attack of bronchitis, which obliged them to stop at Montpellier. They called in Doctor Courty, one of the cleverest practitioners of the celebrated Faculty. He prescribed for the bronchitis, and nearly cured it, but he made no secret of his fears for the general condition of the patient.

“You must, at any cost, reconstitute the exhausted muscular system, stimulate the digestion, animate the circulation, and restore the action of the mucous. Start at once for Aix-les-Bains.”

“We were on our way there, doctor, to try another season, when the bronchitis obliged us to stop in your town.”

“You had better stay six weeks at Aix-les-Bains; after that, you must go to Brides in Tarentaise, and there have your bed carried out into the open air, that you may breathe the vivifying air of the Alps, laden with aromatic tonics. After three weeks at Brides, you must go through France again to reach the hot-water springs of the Bourboule, in the mountains of Auvergne. Those waters, which are exceedingly active in their

effect, will complete the amelioration begun at Aix. When you have finished your season at Bourboule, come back here to Montpellier, for you will then be strong enough to undergo an energetic surgical treatment of two months, to which I shall subject you. You can then rest yourself by passing the winter at Amélie-les-Bains in the Eastern Pyrenees." . . .

XIV.

During three or four months, the successive precepts of this learned consultation were everywhere followed to the letter under the directions of the best local doctor, and everywhere fruitlessly. Neither at Aix-les-Bains, nor at Brides, nor at Bourboule, did Jeanne feel the least improvement in her health.* The most melancholy presentiments overshadowed her soul, she saw herself slowly descending to the grave, and after having most unhappily doubted—at Lourdes, when she was cured and in perfect health—of the reality of the miracle, she now lost by degrees and under the influence of her increasing sufferings, her chimeric faith in the power of the doctors.

Towards the middle of September she was at Bourboule, stretched motionless on her invalid chair, mournfully considering the long shadows stretching out over the country as the setting sun approached the horizon

* At Brides, Mlle. de Fontenay was fortunate enough to meet the Bishop of Tarentaise, who took the greatest interest in her, and showed her much kindness. Mgr. Turinaz, now Bishop of Nancy, was thus one of the witnesses of the long illness of which we are relating the history.

behind which it would soon disappear. By a train of thought peculiar to those who suffer, she connected in her own mind the various details of the landscape spread out before her with her own melancholy condition. Summer was giving place to Autumn, and through her window she noticed, here and there, amongst the luxuriant foliage of the trees, some few yellow leaves, which, struck with premature decay, fell fluttering to the ground. She pictured in the immense granite rocks whose ponderous masses hung frowning over the humble village, the symbol of the crushing calamity which weighed down her young life, resisting, and in all probability ever likely to resist, her efforts to escape from it. And the river Dordogne flowing at her feet seemed to her dejected imagination like the fleeting waves of her own existence.

“Mother, dear mother,” said she, “let us go back to Autun!”

“My dear child, how can you think of such a thing! And Montpellier, and Amélie-les-Bains?” . . .

“Oh! do let us go back to Autun! I am dying of these perpetual attempts to be cured, and my whole being revolts against the kind of life we are leading. Is it not enough to be exiled, alas! from health, without being exiled from one’s own place, one’s family, one’s home? I am home-sick. Hot-water springs, remedies, journeys, doctors and medicine are to become an intolerable torture to me, and I want a respite. I want to live again in our own house, sleep in my own pretty room, see my father and brothers. . . . I want it for myself and for you too, poor, dear mother, who are wearing out your strength far from your faithful ser-

vants, in nursing me night and day—for you, who are killing yourself in trying to make me live.”

“But, my dear child, you must pass the coming winter in a mild climate, Doctor Courty—”

“Dr. Courty has said and may say just what he likes. I must go back to Autun. You can put felt on the doors and windows and have a graduated hot-air stove, and fill my room up with flowers in the day-time and surround me with an artificial spring. And then.” . . .

“And then what?”

“And then—nothing!” replied Jeanne, wiping away a tear.

The thoughts to which Jeanne would not give expression for fear of distressing her mother were, that since she *must* die, she would rather yield up her soul to God beneath her father’s roof, surrounded by the prayers and adieus of her family, than expire in a strange place, in the vulgar atmosphere of an hotel room and exposed to the mercenary care of hotel servants. Her mother at last consented and they left Bourboule.

XV.

At Autun the few friends who were allowed to penetrate into the sick girl’s room were horrified to see the ravages made by disease in a constitution once overflowing with exuberant life. Poor Jeanne was the shadow of her former self, and weak beyond anything that could be imagined. Her languid arms refused to carry the food to her mouth, and during three weeks or a month her mother was obliged to feed her like a baby.

It fatigued her to hear anyone talking; her eyes were too weak to read and her head to think.

From the depths of this abyss she turned her heart to God and implored the help of the Blessed Virgin, the Hope of the Hopeless. In her secret heart began to dawn the wish to return to the Sacred Grotto; and her memory actively repassed every detail of her visit to Lourdes. She asked to see the Bishop who was then the very venerable Mgr. de Léséleuc de Kerouara, and to him she communicated the strange event of her fugitive cure.

"I have a priest in my diocese, who was miraculously cured," said he; "it is the Abbé de Musy. Well! I will pray the Blessed Virgin to cure you miraculously also. *In her name* I command you to pray to her for your cure, and on my side I will call on her also."

Then taking a little picture from his Breviary, he traced a few words on the back of it and gave it to Jeanne. The words he had written were these, borrowed from the Word of God:—"Ask and you shall receive."

Therefore, Jeanne asked.

A priest who was living at that time, a man of fervent piety and immense charity, also joined his prayers to hers and encouraged her to hope and believe. It was the Abbé Duchêne, Superior of the little Seminary of Autun. Amongst all the souls whom he directed towards the Heavenly Country, Jeanne was his spiritual child of predilection and the special object of his most paternal solicitude. He often went to see her, at his word doubt and discouragement fled from her mind, and her beloved parents were comforted

When the latter were more than usually overcome by grief, they sought him whom all called the "Good Superior," and they seldom came back from their visit without having found some balm for their troubled hearts, some consolation for their sorrow, some softening of their inward affliction.

One morning in November, Madame de Fontenay, feeling more than usually crushed beneath the weight of her cross, went to seek a little strength at the source whence she was accustomed to draw it. As she was coming out, after her interview with the Abbé Duchêne, she crossed a tall priest, who was unknown to her, at the door of the Seminary.

"What is his name?" she asked of the concierge.

"It is the Abbé de Musy."

"M. de Musy? The paralysed priest who was cured at Lourdes?"

"The same."

The poor mother hastened to run after this priest, so favoured of Heaven.

"*Monsieur l'Abbé*," she said, "would you perform a work of mercy, and come into our house to bless my daughter, who is infirm as you were?"

"Very willingly."

A few minutes after, the Abbé de Musy was standing beside the sick-bed.

"Alas! alas! what must I do?" murmured Jeanne.

"Believe and pray. Be resigned for the present, and hope in the future."

"Monseigneur de Léséleuc has already given me the same encouragement, and has promised to intercede for my cure even without my asking him. What a great

miracle it would be! You will pray for it also, will you not?"

"Yes, indeed, I will. I am going to Lourdes very soon, to thank my Benefactress. On the day of the Immaculate Conception, at the very altar where my prayers were answered, I will supplicate the Blessed Virgin to do for you what she has done for me."

XVI.

M. de Musy started on his pilgrimage the first week in December. We have given an account of the journey elsewhere.* The fame of his miraculous cure had spread through all the Diocese and beyond it, and the natural consequence was, that people from all parts recommended themselves to his prayers. Therefore, at the *Memento* of the Mass, at the moment when the priest becomes, before God, the ambassador of the inhabitants of the earth, and presents to Him their prayers and their desires, the excellent Abbé de Musy took excessive care to remember everything, and minutely searched his memory so as not to forget any of those who had charged him with their invocations and messages for Our Lady of Lourdes. But amongst those numerous intentions there was one which seemed to detach itself from the rest, and preponderate in his thoughts, not by any inclination of his own heart, nor by any effort of his own will, but by a sort of divine obsession impossible to control, and which imposed itself on him in spite of himself. That intention, that thought, that prayer, was the one relating to the recovery of Mlle. de

* See "The Miracle of the Assumption," page 85.

Fontenay. During the day, he was careful to write to Autun and tell them of this sign of good omen. From the instant she heard of it, the determination to return to the Grotto of the Apparitions, and bathe in the Piscina, took definitive possession of Jeanne's mind.

XVII.

During the course of her long illness, they had been able to carry her sometimes, at wide intervals, as far as the church of *Notre Dame*, or the chapel of the Little Seminary. But, notwithstanding the care they took to make the carriage go at a walking pace, that she might not be shaken during the short distance that separated the house from the church, it was found necessary to give up all idea of taking her there for the future, because of the intolerable suffering that all movement caused her, and especially because of the grave consequences apprehended by the doctors.

Thanks to a permission obtained from Rome, she was able to have an altar put up in the room next her own, and the door of communication being put wide open, a large looking-glass was so arranged that in its reflection she could follow, from her bed, the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice.

But while the bodily condition of the young girl became visibly worse, her moral state entered a fresh phase, and assumed new and striking features. While, on the one hand, her ailing body, already so frail and exhausted, became daily weaker, on the other, her soul, which seemed to everyone on the point of leaving the world, grew strong in the certain hope of a speedy cure.

But, did this increase of hope proceed from that unhesitating faith to which Our Lord has promised miracles, or from the burning and ungovernable excitement that fever and forced idleness often engender in sick brains? Painful questions that suggested themselves to the minds of those who watched around her bed. It was so much the more to be feared, that sometimes the appearance of absolute certainty suddenly collapsed, and gave place to exactly opposite feelings. Now and then, Jeanne was assailed by depressing presentiments; she apprehended the fatigue of the long journey, and feared to find only death at the very place where so many others had revived to health and life.

Having resolved to be at Lourdes for the 15th of August, Feast of the Assumption, Jeanne desired to distribute, in the three months which preceded her departure, a *triduum* of Masses to prepare her for the pilgrimage so ardently desired and so tremblingly apprehended. On the eve of the first monthly Mass, however, the 14th of May, towards evening, she was so weak and sinking that the Abbé Duchêne, whom she had sent for, thought it better not to hear her confession for fear of exposing her to a fatal fatigue. She was much distressed at his refusal, and went sadly to sleep, after imploring the Mother of the afflicted to support her in her afflictions. But during her slumbers, Bernadette, in religion Sister Mary-Bernard (who was then still living at the Convent of St. Gildard) appeared to her in a dream, smiling and gracious, and dressed in her costume of a Sister of Nevers.

"Do not be troubled, neither be afraid," said she to

Jeanne. "You will be cured at Lourdes. Only pray *with confidence* to the Blessed Virgin."

Then Jeanne raised herself towards the *Voyante* of Lourdes and embraced her tenderly; but, finding herself incommoded by the nun's cap, she made a movement and suddenly awoke. She saw nothing before her but her bed-curtains, dimly lighted by the uncertain flame of the night-light, but she felt herself filled with inexpressible joyfulness, and, as it were, fully assured of recovery.

No one gave vent to their reflections aloud in her presence, but many of her relatives and friends, priests and lay, murmured sadly: "Alas! alas! a young girl's dream on a Spring night is but a fragile foundation for such great hopes!"

Jeanne herself wished for a more solid basis to what she called "her certainty". She had letters written to the different members of her family, her friends, the nuns of her acquaintance, and Bernadette, asking them to pray for her. She distributed alms, and besought the help of the weak and poor of this world, who are so strong and powerful in heaven; she borrowed the riches of the poor, and begged of the beggars. She turned her face towards Rome and addressed herself to the Holy Father. Pius IX. sent her his blessing with these words: "May the Blessed Virgin bless you and heal you".

Jeanne's pious and beloved grandmother, the Dowager Viscountess of Froissard-Broissia, took an active part in this crusade of supplication and invocation. Like Moses on the mountain, she raised to heaven her arms laden with good works, and humbly but fervently prayed

for the cure of her grand-daughter, in exchange for her eighty years of saintly and charitable existence.

XVIII.

In the midst of the doubts and anxieties of the greater number of Jeanne's friends, the Abbé de Musy remained calm and confident. For him everything was a reason for increase of faith, and he proclaimed aloud what he also called "his certainty". On that occasion a few sceptics, even among the faithful, remarked, with a certain touch of truth, that moderation is the rarest thing in the world, and they were almost inclined to think that the priest of Digoine, after the miracle which had transformed his life, could not avoid falling into the virtuous excess of inclining to believe too much.

Weeks and months passed on, and M. de Musy celebrated Holy Mass, on the 3rd August, at the private altar of the house of Fontenay. Jeanne followed it from her bed of pain. As they were at the epoch of the Feast of Saint Peter in Bonds, the officiating priest was inspired by the remembrance of that event, and the train of ideas it suggested was prominent in the few words he addressed to his intimate audience. He thus ended his allocution:—

"You see, Christians, you see! When the Almighty commands, nothing can resist Him! The prison-doors open and the chains fall off the captive. . . . But there are other chains than those with which the persecutors bound the beneficent hands of the Prince of the Apostles. There are infrangible chains, which bind to a sick-bed and seem to incorporate with incurable dis-

ease, one of God's creatures. There are chains which though worn by only one child, bruise and weigh down a whole family. But I confidently believe that the voice from heaven will soon be heard, and at its sound *those chains also will fall off!*"

These words, like those pronounced in the preceding November by Mgr. de Léséleuc, sank deeply into Jeanne's soul, and she loved to repeat them over and over during her painful days and her long sleepless nights. The pious prelate whose name we have recalled had fallen asleep in the Lord hardly a month after having promised Jeanne to pray the Blessed Virgin for her cure. The young girl, who venerated his memory, often invoked him in the secret of her prayers as a powerful auxiliary and a celestial friend.

The day of the discourse on the "*chains which were to fall off*," Jeanne and her mother, knowing that the Abbé de Musy intended to arrive at Lourdes a little before the 15th of August, solicited permission to go with him. But he flatly refused them.

"No, certainly not," said he. "The whole diocese has its eyes fixed upon me because of the miracle with which I have been favoured. If I went with the patient, and she came back to Autun in the same state, it would only make the failure more evident; whereas if, on the contrary, she came back cured, it would be thought that I had done something towards it, and the infallible result would be that I should be looked upon as a sort of miracle-worker by a good many worthy people, who would immediately want to canonize me. No! no! a thousand times no!"

This decision was received with profound regret.

Jeanne had flattered herself from the beginning that the priest miraculously cured would be as the angel Raphael of this distant pilgrimage. However, no objection could be raised against the reasons he had given, and her only answer was in her silent tears. . . . Those are arguments of the heart, often a thousand times more eloquent than any argument of the intellect; and the Abbé de Musy, troubled by that mute supplication, and afflicted at the sight of the pain his refusal had caused, was in reality more perplexed than he cared to show. However legitimate might be the motives that determined him, pity cried aloud in his heart. Following his invariable custom in moments of trouble, he had recourse to prayer.

It happened that like Jeanne and her family, he had a profound veneration for the pious memory of Mgr. de Léséleuc. He implored the prelate to lighten and guide him through the labyrinth of his uncertainty and anxiety.

What passed after that? We cannot tell. But it is certain that during the last mass of a noveno said in memory of the defunct bishop, the Abbé de Musy felt his hesitations suddenly cease under the impulsion of an inward voice whose accents were irresistible. And his will, like a ship which the pilot's hand suddenly turns on another tack, took an exactly opposite view of what had at first appeared to his reason as the only and the best possible course to pursue.

"I consent to whatever you choose," he said to Jeanne and her mother. "Your itinerary shall be mine. Fix the day and hour for starting yourselves, and may God be with us."

XIX.

Jeanne's religious enthusiasm increased to a degree that alarmed many of those who loved her. She could talk and think of nothing but the miracle, she even fixed its early date. Theological considerations mixed themselves up with her excited hopes.

"The solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin," said she, "has been a Feast of Feasts to me all my life, and I have celebrated it more joyously than any of them. From my earliest years my soul rejoiced at the supreme triumph of our Celestial Mother: on the 15th of the month I used to communicate in honour of the great 15th of August which is consecrated to her in the Catholic liturgy. If the Immaculate Conception marked Mary's entry into our poor world, the Assumption marked the blessed moment when she took possession of the Eternal Kingdom. The Church has proclaimed the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin as a dogma of faith. I long with all my heart for the happy time when she will proclaim as a corresponding dogma, the glorious Assumption of the Mother of God."

Thus spoke Jeanne, much to the surprise of those who heard her. She added:

"It is on the Feast of the Assumption that I shall see the end of my cruel sufferings. As soon as the Blessed Virgin has cured me I shall wear her colours. Let my dress be prepared. A white dress and a blue sash!"

Such exuberance of hope made them tremble for the

consequences of a disappointment. But no one dared trouble her calm conviction by seeming to doubt. . . . They were carried away by a current against which resistance was impossible, so yielding to Jeanne's desire, Madame de Fontenay sent for the dressmaker and ordered the gala dress. But the following day, the poor girl could not sit up to have the white body tried on. One of her relations of whom she was very fond, Madame Harold de Fontenay, had come that day to see her.

"You must replace me, dear," said the sick girl. "You are about my size, and whatever fits you will be sure to do admirably for me. And then I shall be so happy to have a remembrance of you in my resurrection dress."

The young lady tried on the costume. While it was being fitted Jeanne's feverish eyes followed every detail attentively and took note of the cut and style of it. The measures had been well taken, the dressmaker had used her scissors cleverly, and everything had perfectly succeeded.

There was something in this scene at the same time graceful and terrible. For Jeanne, infirm and helpless, incapable of raising herself on her bed, to be able to wear the costume that a friend was trying on in her place,—the dress with its long white folds, and the blue sash,—it would require nothing less than a direct intervention of Almighty God in the form of one of those incomprehensible miracles such as used to be worked by the hand of Jesus Christ.

"Stand before the glass," said Jeanne to her cousin; "that is how I shall be in a week from now."

Madame Harold de Fontenay was quite overcome. The light muslin weighed on her shoulders like some sinister vestment, and she hurriedly took off the white robe that reminded her of a winding-sheet. "Alas!" she thought, "this resurrection dress, as she calls it, will perhaps be only the spotless garb of her burial!" She hurried from the room, for her tears choked her, and hardly had she closed the door when her sobs broke forth.

"What is the matter? What is it?" asked her husband, who was waiting for her in the next room.

"Oh! dear husband, I think Jeanne must be raving. She declares she is going to be cured, and is having a white dress made! . . . Oh! I never before understood how ill she really is!"*

XX.

On the Monday morning, 10th of August, the "Good Superior" carried the Holy Communion to Jeanne. It was a necessary viaticum for such a perilous journey, undertaken in opposition to all human prudence, for the purpose of seeking a divine remedy for her ills. They had the greatest difficulty in carrying the sick girl along the winding passages and corridors of the house, and laying her in the carriage that was waiting to take her to the station. The least movement of her body had for some time caused her such acute shooting pains, that when it was necessary to lift her from place

* Madame Harold de Fontenay of whom it is here question, has been prematurely taken from the affection of her family, leaving behind her the memory of her sweet and exquisite virtues.

to place, they had to carry her in a horizontal position, like a dying person on a stretcher or a dead body on a bier.

The domestics and the few intimate friends who surrounded the carriage, could not refrain from tears. Jeanne alone, amidst so many anxious and grief-stricken faces, was radiant with hope.

"Do not cry," she said, smilingly, "but look at me well. It is the last time you will see me like this."

"God grant it! my dear child," replied Mme. Joseph de Fontenay, one of her aunts, a most excellent person, full of anxiety about her. "But we must be prepared for everything.—You know that in provincial stations orders for saloon-carriages must be given at least a week beforehand. Has anyone thought to order one for your return?"

"My return!" cried Jeanne. "I shall come back like other people, and in a third-class carriage if it is necessary!"

Her answer made most contrary impressions on those who heard her,

"What faith!" cried some.

"What excitement!" sighed others.

The patient was placed in a railway carriage transformed into a bedroom. Her mother and an old servant, the faithful Pierette, herself half-crippled with rheumatism and afflicted with deafness, took their places beside her. Pierette was going to Lourdes, to pray not for her own cure but for her young mistress's. The Abbe de Musy, according to his promise, was in the train. He and Joseph de Fontenay had places in the carriage next to Jeanne's. Henry was unwell and obliged to keep

his room, and M. de Fontenay alone had been able to accompany the travellers to the station. When the train moved slowly out of the station, he followed with his eyes that long string of carriages hurried noisily away by the roaring powers of fire and steam; and remained there motionless, with fixed gaze, until the last clouds of smoke had disappeared from the horizon and he could no longer hear the rattling storm of iron which whirled away from him his wife, his daughter, and his youngest son. Whither were they hastening, those beloved ones who had just vanished from his sight? They were going towards the unknown—an unknown which a few minutes before had been full of hope when they were all together praying and believing, but was fraught with terror now that they were separated and that neither Jeanne's amazing certainty nor the ardent exhortations of the miraculously cured priest were there to animate his heart and revive his failing faith. . . .

At the branch line of Montchanin, where the train stopped for a few minutes, the pilgrims perceived on the platform of the station a young and grave bishop, whom they immediately recognised. "What a happy coincidence," they cried. It was their bishop, Mgr. Perraud, who had arrived from Paray-le-Monial and was returning to Autun. He came up to the carriage where Jeanne was and gave her his blessing, which seemed to fill her with new strength as his presence filled her with joy.

"I start," said she, "under the protection of my two bishops. In heaven, where Mgr. de Léséleuc certainly is, he keeps his promise and implores the Blessed Virgin for me. Here, on earth, by a providential dispensation,

Mgr. Perraud, his successor, comes across our path to bless me just at the moment when we touch the limits of his diocese."

After indescribable fatigues, and many painful attacks caused by the shaking of the train, Jeanne arrived at Lourdes on the Tuesday evening more dead than alive. The journey had lasted thirty-three hours.

XXI.

The next morning as soon as she was awake, she asked to be carried to the Grotto; but her aching limbs, her exhausted state, and her extreme feebleness rendered it impossible. She was obliged to wait till late in the afternoon. The morning, however, was not entirely lost. About eleven o'clock, there came a knock at the door, and a prelate of a rugged but pleasant aspect stood on the threshold.

"Monseigneur Peyramale!" cried mother and daughter, delighted.* And the remembrance of the words of the Servant of Mary came suddenly back to their minds.

"We are come back to invoke anew the power of Our Lady of Lourdes. But this time we believe with all our souls!"

"*Fiat tibi sicut credidisti.* According to your faith so be it done unto you. . . . Have confidence, and hope for a great miracle. I have an idea that the Blessed

* The Curé of Lourdes had been promoted in the month of March previous to the dignity of Apostolic Protonotary by a brief from Pope Pius the Ninth. At the same date the chapel of the pilgrimage was made a basilica.

Virgin is going to kill the fatted calf for the return of her prodigal child !”

“ Ah ! Monseigneur, pray for us.”

“ It is already done !”

The heat at Lourdes in the month of August is often torrid. On that day the scorching southern sun pursued his way through a sky of cloudless blue, and rendered the atmosphere intolerable. And yet, Jeanne was cold, very cold.

“ Transie et grelottante en la fleur de ses ans
On eût dit que l’hiver habitait son printemps !”

When she was put into the carriage to go to the Rocks of Massabiella, it was necessary to wrap her in shawls and travelling rugs, and put a hot water bottle to her feet.

She overcame without hesitation the instinctive shrinking of her nerves, and was immersed on her arrival in the icy water of the Piscina.

The disease which had ravaged all the rest of her body had respected her thick and magnificent hair. When her tresses and plaits were undone, her hair fell to her feet ; and feminine nature is so constituted, that the mother for sure, and the daughter most probably, took a certain pleasure in contemplating the splendid ripples of that silky mantle. So Jeanne bathed her body in the sacred stream, but on that and the following days they were careful to put her in only up to her neck, so that her thick hair might not be wetted ; it would have taken so long to dry, and might have given her cold or brought on a feverish attack. Prudent precautions were thus mingled with the aspirations of faith.

Partly from necessity, and partly from a kind of half-superstitious idea, it occurred to them on leaving the Piscina that they might borrow for the purpose of wheeling Jeanne about on that miraculous ground, an invalid carriage left in the sanctuary as an *ex voto* the previous year by a paralytic priest who had suddenly recovered the use of his limbs. There is often in the human mind a childish tendency to believe that certain objects are lucky.

XXII.

At the Grotto of Lourdes, as formerly around the five porches of the Pool of Bethesda at Jerusalem, suffering of every kind might be met at every hour, awaiting the uncertain moment of deliverance, and amongst the sick and afflicted who implored the help of the heavenly Doctor some naturally attracted attention more particularly than others. There was the Abbé Cabane, a poor old priest of the diocese of Agen, who, with his left side completely paralysed, passed all his time at the Grotto dragging himself painfully about with the help of a stick. There was also an elderly lady, quite impotent, lying in an invalid chair on wheels. She was the Countess du Boulay from the neighbourhood of Rouen, and she prayed for her cure with ardent piety and almost impatient fervour. She passed whole days at the feet of the statue of Mary, she called to her help the prayers of all those whom she supposed to possess any influence with Our Lady of Lourdes, and when a priest, a bishop, or a pilgrim of fervent appearance met her eye, she instantly despatched her maid (a worthy person who seemed devoted to her) to whisper

in their ear: "Please, have the charity to pray for my poor mistress whom you see yonder!" As that pious embassy was often renewed and to a great number of persons, several of them had noticed the maid particularly, and observed that though she asked so many to pray to the Blessed Virgin for her mistress, she herself never knelt nor even bowed before the statue of Our Lady of Lourdes.

"Alas!" replied Madame du Boulay in answer to an indiscreet remark made before her, "my maid is a good, devoted, affectionate creature, she is even pious in her way, but she is a protestant and does not believe in the Blessed Virgin."

Around these afflicted ones crying for help knelt two or three hundred pilgrims praying or whispering together, and through their midst, drawn along in her little carriage and holding in her hand the rosary that never left her, Jeanne passed on her way to the Grotto.

It was there that the writer of these pages perceived for the first time, half-lying on her pillows and cushions, the sick girl whose history he is now relating. He remarked her as a new-comer amongst the human miseries that crowded around the Rock of Miracles, and he felt for her that sorrowful compassion and pity that one experiences at the sight of youth blighted in its flower and vaguely threatened with premature decay. But he did not know her then, neither was he acquainted with the tall distinguished looking priest who was praying near her, and seemed to be encouraging her every now and then. It was not till later that we knew him as the celebrated Abbé de Musy.

Kneeling beside her daughter, the mother raised her

heart and her tearful eyes in fervent supplication to the merciful Mother of God. Near her, a humble servant-maid of delicate appearance clasped her hands in fervent prayer, and a young man stood with his arms crossed and his eyes fixed on the statue of Mary, expressing in the contraction of his candid brow and the play of his mobile features, his ardent faith and his anxious brotherly love. It was Joseph de Fontenay.

XXIII.

On the Friday, 14th of August, vigil of the Assumption, a person called at the house where we were staying during our annual pilgrimage, and asked to see us. It was the young man whose pious attitude and expression had so struck us at the Grotto the evening before.

"Sir," he said, "I am come to you from my sister, who has been ill for seven years, and who arrived here a few days ago, to obtain if possible, a miracle from the Blessed Virgin. It was your book which revealed Lourdes to her and first inspired her with the thought of making this long journey to ask for her cure. She would very much like to speak to you, but she is infirm and suffers intense pain whenever she is moved about. If you could call on her, she would be very grateful to you." . . .

"Very well, go back and tell her I will follow you in a few moments."

And, indeed, ten minutes after I was in the street of the Grotto at the address Joseph had given me.

Madame de Fontenay received me. "It was kind of

you, sir," she said, "to comply so promptly with our request."

And she introduced me into her daughter's room.

The sick girl was in bed, and, notwithstanding the heat of the season, was literally buried under blankets and eiderdowns. She held out to me a wasted hand which I respectfully pressed to my lips.

"You are the author of 'Our Lady of Lourdes,' she said in a faint voice, and looking at me with innocent curiosity. "Oh! sir, how your book has fascinated me and what tears I have shed over it! It is a wonderful history." . . .

"The events were so striking in themselves, that I could not spoil them entirely," I answered smiling. "It has pleased God to bless those humble pages and use them for His glory. But the book, alas! is better worth than the author, and you would be sadly in error, Mademoiselle, if you estimated the one by the other. Unfortunately for me, it is better to read my books than to know me personally. . . . But I am come, all the same, as you expressed a wish to see me."

In a few brief words she sketched me an outline of her long sufferings.

"*Monsieur l'Abbé* de Musy has accompanied me to Lourdes, and we are lodging in the apartments that he occupied himself last year. He went out of here impotent and helpless the day of the Assumption, and came back a few hours after completely cured. . . . Oh! I believe! I believe! I am full of hope and confidence."

While she was talking I looked at her attentively, and read in the expressive lines of her face, all changed

and, so to speak, ravaged by suffering, the silent commentary of her painful story.

She was very pale, and her deadly pallor was brought more strikingly into relief by contrast with her large black eyes and the dense masses of her hair. Her complexion had the peculiar transparency that long illness gives when it strikes at last at the very principle and essence of life. It almost seems then, that the opacity of the body is effaced and dissipated, and that matter, become partially immaterial, allows glimpses of that inner life invisible in a state of perfect health. Through the young girl's diaphenous features shone the reflection of a soul delicate and innocent in itself, and brought to a high degree of purity in the fire of tribulation.

The poor girl felt certain she should be cured on the morrow, which was the Feast of the Assumption.

As she went on opening her heart to me, I felt myself gained over by her absolute confidence, and began to have the brightest and happiest presentiments. At the same time I would not yield completely to their influence, for, more than once, under similar circumstances, my hopes and expectations had been deceived. . . . Nevertheless, I could not help encouraging her faith by relating some of the marvels accomplished by Our Lady of Lourdes, especially the miraculous cure of Lucie Fraiture—a most touching miracle that we hope soon to communicate to our readers. . . . Jeanne listened with emotion to the various details of that celestial drama, and the suffering girl's eyes overflowed at the history of the affliction and joy of her unknown

sister. Like herself she was a "Child of Mary". She resumed—

"The Abbé de Musy will pray for me to-morrow at his Thanksgiving Mass. He intends to celebrate it at eight o'clock at the high altar of the Crypt before which he was cured last year, on the same day and at the same hour. Mgr. Peyramale has promised me his powerful help; he will ask fervently for my cure. Bernadette and a number of Religious, many poor persons, friends and relatives will receive Holy Communion to-morrow, to obtain the grace I am soliciting. Please join your prayers to those of my friends, you who have been so mercifully favoured of the Blessed Virgin."

"With all my heart, Mademoiselle, I will pray to her to cure you; and I shall be present with all my family at the eight o'clock mass to-morrow morning."

XXIV.

The dawn of the Assumption had risen when Joseph entered his sister's room. Her mother and Pierette had just finished dressing her.

"Well, Jeanne, so it is to-day that the Blessed Virgin is to grant your prayers?"

"Yes," she replied, with child-like gaiety, and also with child-like faith; "yes, it is to-day that Our Lady will cure me—to-day, Joseph, to-day!"

Then after a moment of silence, she added—

"Will you do me a great favour, my dear brother?"

"Certainly, anything—I am at your orders."

"Then go and tell Mgr. Peyramale that I was anxious to obtain a special prayer from him at the moment of

starting for this mass, where I hope to find the end of my sufferings.

Joseph ran out, and soon came back.

"Monseigneur sends you word that he hopes more than ever, and that he will pray as fervently as he can."

The Abbé de Musy had gone on before, and Joseph went to the Grotto to fetch the invalid chair, and have it ready on the esplanade of the Basilica to take his sister into the Crypt when she arrived. It was now more than half-past seven. An immense crowd of people had assembled at Lourdes on the occasion of the solemnity of the Assumption; consequently most of the carriages that passed along the street of the Grotto were full, and the coachmen of the others refused to take as their fare an impotent person whom they would be obliged to carry downstairs. They began to be very anxious and fearful of not being at the Crypt for the Abbé de Musy's mass. Jeanne alone was serene and confident, and she reassured the others.

"Do not be afraid," said she, "the happy time is at hand, when I shall no longer require to be carried to the Grotto. . . . And as for this carriage—the last I shall need—since I am bound to have it, the God of Goodness will inspire the driver of it with sufficient compassion to accept me as his fare."

And, indeed, a very few minutes after, a driver condescended to stop, certainly without any sort of suspicion that the Lord had been invoked for him and that he was the agent of Providence. With a good deal of grumbling and ill-temper, he brought the poor sick girl down in his arms, and laid her, helpless and powerless, on the back seat of the open carriage.

Madame de Fontenay sat opposite her daughter. The carriage had soon passed the last houses of the town, and entered the admirable green country, in the midst of which the limpid, foaming waters of the Gave flow over their rocky bed. To the right stretched the soft outline of the hills of Visens or of Bartrés, and through the thick foliage of the trees, floated a long waving cloud of white smoke, emanating from the train that was steaming into the station of Lourdes, filled with pilgrims from Pau, Orthez or Bayonne. To the left the summits of the Pyrenees and the eternal glaciers sparkled in the sun.

It was superb weather on that magnificent morning of the Assumption, and Nature, like the Church, seemed all joy and gladness. The sky was cloudless, the sun brilliant. The light breeze from the snowy mountains came charged with reviving freshness; and here and there could be heard the blithe warbling of a bird. On the road, carriages and foot-passengers hurried along in a rapidly increasing crowd; some going in haste to the Grotto or the Basilica, others returning to the town or moving in the direction of the Field of the Châlet, for the early Masses—some wearing round their necks, or at their waists, the big rosary of six decades, peculiar to those parts; others carrying a basket of provisions, intending after Communion, to take their repast with their family or their friends under the sheltering thatch of the rustic Rotunda.*

Further on, a group of young girls went along singing the *Ave maris stella*, or some other hymn to Our Lady of Lourdes. And on every face could be read innocent

* On the subject of the Rotunda, see Note II. of the Appendix.

joy, brotherly goodwill, and the cordial content of God's children.

"There is a poor afflicted person going to ask for her cure. May it please Our Lady of Lourdes to grant it!" said they as Jeanne passed in the carriage.

She, however, took no notice of the lovely landscape, or the living masses of people around her. Her hands were clasped, and her colourless lips murmured supreme invocations. . . .

As they passed the Rotunda, she raised her eyes and beheld, all at once, the spire of the Basilica springing from its earthly foundations towards the blue firmament of heaven. It seemed like the image and symbol of her hope, that turned away from earth and aspired only to Celestial Mercy. The sight moved her so deeply, that her feelings could no longer be expressed in articulate prayer, but found vent in a burst of tears. Weep, my child, weep! "Blessed are they that weep, for they shall be comforted."

XXV.

On the esplanade of the Basilica her brother Joseph, in company with a few friends, was waiting for her with the invalid chair. Some of her relatives were there also, amongst them Madame de Fontenay, de Sommans and her daughter Jeanne, the sick girl's cousin, who had come from Luchon to pray with her, and join their supplications to hers. There were also present: the Countess du Boulay, mournfully seated in her invalid chair; the poor Abbé Cabane, half-paralysed and leaning on his stick; the Duchess de Salviati; Mme.

and Mlle. de Montille ; Mlle. de Charodon ; the Countess d'Armaillé and her nieces ; and many more, all anxious to be present at the anniversary Mass about to be said by the miraculously cured priest.

Jeanne was lifted out of the carriage and placed in the invalid chair with every possible precaution ; but in spite of all their care, the least movement was so painful to her, that her features contracted with agony. Her friends came eagerly round her to say a word of hope, and promise to pray for her ; she thanked them gratefully, but in her secret soul, she longed for the peace and repose only to be found beneath the sacred roof of a church ; and was impatient to reach her place before the altar.

"It is time, Joseph dear, to take me into the Crypt." But it happened that the Reverend Père Sempé, the Superior of the Missionaries at Lourdes, whose active piety and universal zeal regulated the order of the pilgrimage, was accustomed on feast-days to forbid the entrance of the faithful into the Crypt, so that all might be constrained to be present at the ceremonies in the Basilica and by that means increase their splendour.

The outside door of the Crypt was therefore locked and double-locked. In vain Joseph and several others knocked and thumped for it to be opened.

"It is quite useless to knock," said one of the Brothers belonging to the convent ; "the Reverend Father Superior has forbidden anyone to enter the Crypt this morning."

The consternation and anguish of the little crowd of pilgrims at this interdiction may be more easily imagined than described.

"But that is impossible !"

"I tell you it is the order of the Superior," repeated the Brother.

"But why has he given such an order? Could we not speak to him?"

"No, he is busy in the Basilica."

Joseph then thought of a means which would give him access to the Crypt by an indirect road. He whispered a word to Jeanne and his mother, and going up to the Basilica, he worked his way through the throng of worshippers, entered the sacristy and ran down the stairs leading to the underground chapel where the Abbé de Musy was getting ready to celebrate the Sacred Mysteries. By the greatest chance in the world, the Abbé had also come into the Crypt by the upper church, and had thus entered without any difficulty and without having the slightest suspicion of the Superior's prohibition.

"Why, where is your sister?" he asked, on seeing Joseph.

"She is outside. Father Sempé has ordered the door of the Crypt to be kept locked this morning that no one may come in."

The Abbé de Musy immediately went out and applied to the functionaries of the Temple, who opposed to his arguments the Superior's formal orders. He insisted as one insists under urgent and supreme circumstances, he became imperative, even. At last the sacristans and lay-brothers yielded to the representations of the priest who had been cured by the Blessed Virgin; but they tried to attenuate their disobedience by limiting the congregation to one class.

"Only the sick! Only the sick! By order of the

Reverend Father Superior!" cried the sacristan, who was going to half-open the door, to the crowd outside.

But without paying the least attention to this injunction, the foremost among the pilgrims did their best to rush in after Jeanne and the other invalids. Fifty or sixty persons succeeded thus, in opposition to all the ukases, in penetrating into the interior of the edifice before the door could be shut on the torrent of invaders. A white-headed priest of distinguished appearance, the Abbé Bouvier, was foremost in this pious insurrection. He believed already in the miracle, and meant to be a witness of it at any price.

XXVI.

The door had been shut and again besieged by a compact crowd of complaining and grumbling pilgrims, when, according to the promise I had made to Mlle. de Fontenay the previous evening, I arrived at the Crypt a little before eight o'clock. "Monsieur Lasserre!" cried a chorus of voices, as soon as I appeared, "do go and tell them to open the door and let us in."

"Alas! my good friends, I have no authority for that. As I cannot get the door opened for myself any more than for you, I shall try and overcome the difficulty in another way."

Taking therefore the indirect road by which Joseph de Fontenay had preceded me a few minutes before, I succeeded like him in getting into the Crypt, followed by my family and two or three insubordinate pilgrims whom my bad example had led away.

We looked immediately for Mlle. de Fontenay. She

had had the chair in which she was sitting, or rather lying, placed against the double pillar, to the left, where the Abbé de Musy had hidden himself the year before ; her mother, her faithful maid, and the friends we have already mentioned, were grouped around her.

A few minutes later, the door was again cautiously opened, by favour. But, this time, measures of precaution against public faith were so well taken that no one entered except the Duke de Nemours, the Prince Ladislas Czartoryski, the Princess Czartoryska, and the Princess Blanche of Orleans. All the other pilgrims were excluded in spite of their entreaties. In this manner only about a third of the Crypt was filled up.

As I have just said, my attention was directed towards the sick girl. She held Pius the Ninth's rosary in her fingers as she had done when I first saw her. Her eyes often rested on her mother, and their expression of filial tenderness clearly showed that if she so ardently desired to be cured, it was not only for herself, but still more for the sake of those who loved her.

It is always easy to believe what one wishes to believe, and my heart was moved and full of hope.

A religious thrill seemed to pass through the little assembly when the Abbé de Musy, clothed in the sacred vestments, mounted the altar steps.

Joseph de Fontenay, Jeanne's brother, served the Mass.

The Holy Sacrifice commenced and continued in the midst of a devout and rapt attention. After having administered to himself the Divine Sacrament, the priest distributed the Bread of Life to all who presented themselves at the eucharistic table ; then passing amongst

the faithful he carried to the different sick persons, and finally to Jeanne herself, the Sacred Body of Jesus Christ.

Thus finished the Mass of the Abbé de Musy. Mlle. de Fontenay was still motionless in her invalid chair. Had the King of Glory visited her without curing her? And did He intend her to bear for ever the cross of disease? Was He only trying the sick girl and her family by a momentary disappointment to render their faith more fervent and their reward more magnificent? or had some supernatural action taken place, silently, and mysteriously, and unknown to all? Anxiety was on every face, and in every heart the feeling that all was not yet finished; each one remained in his place and seemed to await the final issue.

XXVII.

The priest who was to celebrate the following Mass now came out of the Sacristy. He also was accompanied by Joseph de Fontenay as chorister boy: and as he passed, I raised my head and recognised him. At the same instant hope suddenly fled. It was the Abbé Sire, professor at the Seminary of Saint Sulpice, the same Abbé Sire who, the year before, at the same Feast of the Assumption and at the same hour of half-past eight, had offered the Holy Sacrifice at that same altar of the Crypt, when the Abbé de Musy was cured. At sight of him a flood of thoughts filled my mind.

“What a strange fancy of the de Fontenays,” said I to myself, “to have invited this priest here, so that all the conditions in which the Abbé de Musy’s cure took

place a year ago being minutely and scrupulously copied to-day, the same supernatural phenomenon might be expected to happen again! . . . And do they really think that because it is the same place,—the same pillar,—the same mass,—the same altar,—the same Feast of the Blessed Virgin,—the same date,—the same hour,—the same officiating priest,—they will suddenly see a reproduction of the same miracle! . . . What vain superstition! A miracle is not a chemical precipitate that one can obtain when one likes by uniting and mixing together the same quantities of the same elements. God is a Spirit! and the effects of His power and goodness have nothing in common with the clever arrangements of exterior things and the mathematical calculations of material combinations. On the contrary the Almighty is indignant at such an outrage to His divine essence. Poor Jeanne's prayers will certainly not be answered, and she will remain a confirmed invalid!" . . . While I was thus following the logical course of my deductions the Abbé Sire finished reading the gospel of which my wandering attention had heard very little.

Must it be acknowledged that these considerations seemed to me full of such rational and Christian philosophy, that I rather admired myself *in petto* for having analysed the actions of Almighty God and the mysterious laws of supernatural events with so much discernment. Some vague echoes of the Pharisee's thanksgiving, some vain likeness to Garo's foolish vanity, were mixed with my prayers and meditations. "Yes, indeed, Lord, I thank Thee for having granted me the precious grace of a well-balanced, far-seeing, and intelligent faith!

Thanks to Thy benefits, I raise myself far above the frivolities, forms, and superstitious tendencies that are, alas! so wide spread, and which even to-day have misled this poor young girl, . . . who assuredly will not be cured!" . . .

I had reached this point of my complacent reflections, when a sort of electric start went through the whole congregation, causing every head to be raised and every eye strained. . . . Jeanne had just risen from her invalid chair, dropping all the shawls and rugs that covered her on the ground. . . . What had passed in the young girl's ardent soul and debilitated frame?

We must retrace our steps a little to relate it properly.

XXVIII.

During the Abbé de Musy's Mass, and shortly after Holy Communion, Jeanne had experienced a painful tingling in her helpless legs.

"What is going to happen to me, now?" she thought, in terror. "Am I going to have an attack in the church? . . . Oh! Blessed Virgin, will you really not cure me?"

The painful tingling ceased in an instant and the young girl resumed her prayer, "Our Lady of Lourdes, have pity on me!"

But again it came on and again she addressed herself to the Mother of God:

"O Blessed Virgin, can it be possible that you will not cure me?" . . .

The tingling again ceased. This time, however, Jeanne understood by a sort of divination of the heart that

the secret agitation which penetrated her nerves, her muscles, the very fibres of her being and the marrow of her bones, was the cure itself being operated in the mystery of her organization. She abandoned herself then without reserve.

"O, Mary! O my Mother! do with me whatever you will." . . . And as if the Sovereign Creator had only been waiting for this act of acquiescence, immediately Jeanne's whole body was subjected to the influence of the divine action. She felt a sort of secret fermentation in her frame similar to that of new wine; life-giving heat boiled and burned within her like an inward fire. And then a profound calm filled her being, removing all agitation except the awe-stricken tremor of her soul which still trembled at what had just taken place. She had an intuition that the Blessed Virgin was contemplating her; and she seemed to hear a voice saying with imperious sweetness: "Stand up! Stand up!" At that moment the Abbé Sire went up the altar steps.

The young girl, bewildered and hesitating, raised her heart in supplicating enquiry towards God.

"O Lord! O dearest Lord! what is this I feel? It must be a dream from heaven! perhaps it is only an illusion! What shall I do? What shall I do? Must I get up and go through this crowd?" . . .

And while she asked for an answer from on high to her increasing perplexity, the officiating priest pronounced the first phrase of the Creed:—" *Credo in unum Deum Patrum omnipotentem.*"

" *Credo!* I believe!" It was the word she wanted. " *Credo!* I believe!" It was the feeling she needed.

"*Credo!* I believe!" It was the act she must accomplish. . . . And then it was that Jeanne stood upright, and that an electric thrill went through the assembly.

She got out of her little carriage, and making a few steps forward, went and knelt at the rails of the sanctuary. I was near her and heard her sobs. . . . The tears sprang to my own eyes, and I quite forgot all about my philosophy.

(We must here add, so as not to lead our readers into error, that the Abbé Sire had in no way been convoked by the family of Mlle. de Fontenay, who were not even acquainted with him, and that the coincidences which we imagined to have been sought after and prepared by human influence, were absolutely fortuitous, and had been disposed by the hand of God.)

XXIX.

There rose a sort of suppressed tumult and a restrained agitation in that prayerful assembly.

Joseph de Fontenay, who was serving the Mass, hearing a vague rumour of whispered exclamations, and becoming aware of an extraordinary movement in the congregation, of which he ignored the cause, turned suddenly round to impose silence, and remind those present by a sign that they were in the House of God, . . . but what were his feelings when he caught sight of his sister, his beloved sister Jeanne, walking towards the altar rails and falling on her knees before them. . . . His emotion was so great that he could

hardly continue the responses to the different prayers of the Holy Sacrifice.

Jeanne remained on her knees during the *Credo*, the Offertory, and the Elevation. . . . Irresistible tears, tears of ineffable sweetness, such as she had never before shed in all her life, streamed down her face which was hidden in her hands.

Having communicated at the previous Mass, she withdrew when the faithful approached the Holy Table, and returned to where her invalid chair was standing. There she knelt on a *prie-Dieu*, advanced for her by the trembling hand of one of the congregation.

Such, however, were the devotional habits of her family, such was, also, the religious awe of all, in the presence of the work of God on His creature, that no one bent towards Jeanne, not even her mother, to enquire what had happened. The general feeling seemed to be that a consecrated minister of the Lord was the proper person to penetrate the mystery of the divine labour.

The Abbé de Musy, being informed of Mlle. de Fontenay's extraordinary state, hastened to arrive.

"What is it?" he whispered. "What has happened? Are you cured?"

Everyone guessed the sense of the questions asked, everyone expected to see the priest and the mother brighten with delight at the young girl's answer. But, on the contrary, their faces became overclouded and anxious, M. de Musy went silently back to the upper church to resume his devotions, and doubt was uppermost in every heart. The reason of it all was, that Jeanne, suffocating with emotion, was unable to articu-

late one single word in answer to the questions put to her. Her voice failed her, and she could no more get a sound from between her lips, than if she had been, like Zachary in the temple, stricken dumb by contact with the Supernatural.

The Abbé Sire's Mass was over, yet still Jeanne remained absorbed in adoration, and motionless as a statue of Prayer. All eyes were fixed on her, in eager expectation.

At last she rose once more, and slowly making the sign of the cross, turned a long look on the altar which she seemed to leave with regret. Then, amidst the unutterable emotion of the faithful, she crossed the Crypt. Entering the long passage that leads to the outside, and seeing an empty space before her, she sprang forward and ran down it, looking perfectly transfigured. But, as it will be remembered, the outside door was shut and locked by order, and suddenly stopped by this obstacle, Jeanne came back to the Crypt.

A respectful hedge, that even her mother did not dare to pass, was formed before her steps. Joseph alone, in a burst of brotherly feeling, ran towards her and pressed her in his arms.

"Oh! sister! My dear sister!"

But Jeanne's heart turned towards the priest who had been miraculously cured like herself, who had accompanied her to Lourdes, and who had encouraged her for so many months to believe and to hope. In passing before the writer of these pages she said:

"I should like to see the Abbé de Musy."

I ran up the stairs leading to the Basilica as quickly as I could.

"Come down!" said I to M. de Musy. "Mlle. de Fontenay is asking for you."

He hurried down.

"Ah! Father," she cried, "I doubt no longer. I am cured!"

"Very well," replied he. "Then follow the secret counsel of your heart, and obey the inspirations of the Blessed Virgin."

XXX.

Jeanne then directed her steps towards the place where she had been touched and cured by the all-powerful right hand of her God and Saviour. Everyone asked as they made way before her:

"What is she going to do? What is she going to do?"

What she did was to take hold of the handle of her invalid chair and realise to the letter those words of the Gospel: *Tolle grabatum tuum et vade*: "Take up thy bed and walk".

Some good-natured persons wanted to help her by pushing the carriage from behind; but Joseph cried, "No, no; let her alone!" And she started on her way.

She went out of the Crypt, along the corridors, across the esplanade of the Basilica, and on to the high road, surrounded by her family shedding tears of joy! And her family at that moment was all of us, and all the crowd of piously-excited people gathering round her, and increasing every minute. She was our sister, our child.

Delighted, yet with eyes modestly bent down, feeling at one and the same time the glory of the grace received

and the confusion of being the centre of such a grand scene, the young girl went down the road with a firm step.

But now she noticed that she had forgotten in the Holy Place, Pius the Ninth's rosary, the rosary which had been the companion of her illness, and was now rendered still more precious by the remembrance of the Miracle. When she had suddenly stood up, it had fallen on the ground by the pillar.

Her cousin, Mlle. de Fontenay, de Sommans, ran back immediately to look for it, and they stopped to wait for her. Jeanne turned towards the August Temple, knelt down with her clasped hands on the handle of the invalid chair, and recited aloud the Virgin's prayer: "Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee . . ." All the multitude of people knelt down with her and repeated: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us, poor sinners".

The rosary was found, and the happy procession continued its way to where the road branches off towards the Grotto.

Now it happened that the Reverend Father Sempé, who was then Superior of the Missionaries, had considered it necessary to stretch padlocked chains across the road, day and night. These chains permitted foot-passengers to walk on the pathways on either side, but carriages were stopped by them until a permission from himself or from one of the Fathers removed the obstacle for some sick or favoured person. That formality, of which the execution was sometimes complicated by the absence of the guardian, frequently resulted in the sick and suffering being forced to wait some time in their

conveyances before they could reach the Grotto or the Piscina.

The Abbé de Musy thought instinctively of this circumstance, for he had himself been inconvenienced by it the previous year, as well as Mlle. de Fontenay on the preceding days. He ran by a short cut to the residence of the Missionaries, got the key, and opened the great padlock himself: so that when Jeanne arrived, pulling her chair after her and followed by a crowd of people, she saw the heavy links of the iron chain lying on the ground before her.

Then the Abbé de Musy, suddenly remembering the circumstance of the Feast of St. Peter-in-Bonds, and of the words he had uttered from the altar to the sick girl, stretched on her bed of pain, cried with an accent of hosanna: "You can pass! you can pass now! *The chains are fallen.*" And Jeanne passed.

At that moment Jeanne was unlike herself. Her whole frame was animated with mysterious strength. Her chest was expanded and palpitating—her head was thrown back by a gesture inexpressibly noble—her face, formerly so pale, was bright with the colours of health. Doubtless, it was the first respirations of a new life, the coursing of rich new blood in the once exhausted veins; but before all and above all, it was the divine reflection of the light from on high, that the luminous hand of the Queen of Heaven had left on this daughter of the children of men.

So far from being exhausted, her supernatural vigour increased. After having trampled under foot the fallen chains, the young girl, like an escaped steed, hastened her steps and began running, dragging after her, like a

triumphal car, the sort of bed upon wheels, where, a few moments before, all the energies of her youth had been held captive and motionless. She galloped along, weeping, laughing, sometimes giving sudden jerks to the little carriage, and playing, so to speak, in the midst of the Miracle, like a child playing beneath the caressing eyes of her mother. She had nothing on her feet but her invalid slippers, and at every five or six steps one of them fell off. Then she stooped with supple agility, seized the flying slipper, put it on again, and resumed her rapid course.

Near the Piscina she stopped, and her brother Joseph brought her a glass of the miraculous water that had formerly sprung up at the command of her Benefactress.

But hardly had she drunk, when a priest with white hair seized the glass, which in his eyes had become a relic, and took possession of it with so much eagerness that we do not think we calumniate the good Abbé Bouvier very deeply by suspecting that the guardians of the Grotto never saw that glass again.

Jeanne then ran on till she arrived before the Rocks of Massabiella. There was an enormous wax taper in the magazine of the Missionaries: Joseph took it and presented it to his sister; and it was thus, bearing the taper in one hand and pulling along her little carriage with the other, that she made her triumphal entrance into the Grotto of the Apparitions. She threw herself on her knees and raised her heart in silent gratitude to the Blessed Virgin.

But the need of a public thanksgiving was felt by all: Jeanne looked round for the Abbé de Musy to lead the Magnificat or the Te Deum.

"Do you see him anywhere in the crowd?" she whispered to me.

"No, Mademoiselle, he is not there, neither do I think he will come."

I felt that the humble priest had withdrawn himself from the general rejoicing for fear of an ovation; and that if he had helped in time of trouble, he would refuse to take part in the glorious reward. He had probably gone to thank Our Lady of Lourdes in the obscurity of the Crypt or the solitude of his chamber.

An ecclesiastic then came forward and said:

"I am a priest of the diocese of Autun, in right of which I lift up my voice to praise the Lord: *Magnificat anima mea Dominum!* *

The canticle of the Virgin broke forth beneath the rocky roof of the Grotto and was taken up by the multitude outside with indescribable enthusiasm. A decade of the rosary was then recited for the sick and afflicted who still awaited their cure.

XXXI.

Two sick persons, in fact, were there present: the Countess du Boulay, in her invalid chair; and the half-paralysed priest still painfully leaning on his knotty stick.

Poor woman, who had prayed and implored, with such impatient fervour and such tenacious hope, to be healed of her disease!

* That priest was the Abbé Bonnamour, professor at the Little Seminary of Autun.

Poor priest, old and indigent, who so much needed health and strength for the exercise of his sacred ministry!

My heart ached at sight of them, and a shadow passed over my joy.

I only waited for the last *Ave Maria*, to go and speak to Mme. du Boulay.

"Courage, Madame! Let us hope that Our Lady of Lourdes, who has this morning so worthily inaugurated the glorious feast of her Assumption, will not allow it to pass without according you a similar grace!"

"Ah! Monsieur Lasserre," she said, as she pressed my hand in hers, "I am not thinking of myself! I am too happy! I am overflowing with joy! Only just look at Mlle. de Fontenay's radiant face! . . . When I saw her yesterday, so young, and yet more infirm than old age, as infirm as I am myself, I really could not think of myself, and I prayed to the Blessed Virgin to cure her rather than me." Then she turned towards her protestant maid, who was so devoted to her, and said:—

"See, my dear girl, see what the Blessed Virgin can do!"

"It is true!" replied the woman, much disturbed.
. . . "Such miracles are unknown in our religion!"

"Who knows," resumed Mme. du Boulay, "if the Blessed Virgin is not waiting for your conversion before she grants me my cure?"

The excellent waiting-woman stammered, hesitated, wept, and did not know what to answer. . . .

"O Lord, enlighten her understanding!"

Then I went towards the unfortunate priest of the

diocese of Agen, the Abbé Cabane. . . . Great tears were rolling down his cheeks, his face was flushed, his breathing oppressed. He stopped me abruptly as I was about to speak.

“I am suffocating with happiness!” he murmured in a trembling voice; “I taste something of the delights of heaven! . . . How beautiful, how beautiful it is! . . . I wish everybody might be cured except me!” . . .

While listening to such sentiments, I understood better than ever that our bodily eyes only perceive in this world the deceitful appearance of things, and that the marvellous splendours of the real and spiritual life, being all interior, are hidden from our gaze. Truly, the grace of God had descended in great and admirable abundance on the young girl who had just been drawing her invalid-chair after her in triumph along the road. Truly, that multitude of people did well in glorifying the Lord for such a manifest miracle. Truly, we act rightly in relating it to-day, to perpetuate the memory of it among Christian people; but, in the judgment of the spirit, and in real superiority, was not that invisible grace, which had secretly descended on those two souls lost in the crowd, incomparably greater and more admirable? That sweet and powerful grace which, penetrating to the very essence of the human heart—that heart, alas! so naturally disposed to selfishness—filled it with such noble, such disinterested, such divine sentiments!

XXXII.

How the rest of the morning and afternoon was passed it would be impossible to tell. Except the details which during those amazing hours were indelibly fixed in our mind by the impression of the miracle itself, everything is effaced from the misty horizon of our remembrance.

I remember only that Mlle. de Fontenay, thoroughly cured as she was, wished still for something that she seemed to consider as the seal of the celestial favour she had received. She wanted the blessing of Mgr. Peyramale, and hastened into Lourdes to get it.

The Curé of the Apparitions spread over her his venerable hands. "Your faith has saved you! Go and doubt no more!"

Then turning towards Joseph, whose youthful face beamed with delight, he took him in his powerful arms and pressed him to his breast.

"Happy fellow!" he cried. "Did I not tell you how it would be?"

He consecrated Jeanne to wear for a year, from that date, the colours of the Blessed Virgin: blue and white. (It will be remembered that she had had her dress prepared at Autun.) And in doing so, the venerable patriarch of Lourdes, filled with the thoughts of the great Assumption, addressed these grave and simple words to the resuscitated girl:—

"My daughter, try to lead a holy life, so that at your death it may be said of you as it was of the Blessed

Virgin:—‘*Assumpta est in cœlis*, she is ascended into Heaven!’”

It has been the custom at Lourdes ever since the origin of the Pilgrimage, for the town to make its solemn procession to the Grotto on the day of the Assumption, after Vespers. On the day in question, Mgr. Peyramale was seen for the first and last time invested with the *cappa magna* of the Roman prelate. He had an intense dislike to anything that attracted general attention towards himself, and the pompous vestments were embarrassing to his love of simplicity. But at such a time he could not resist the desire of one of his faithful friends who had remarked to him:—

“In honour of the miracle, and to please your parishioners, you must put on your vestments of honour to-day.”

The Abbé de Musy walked beside the Curé of Lourdes. In the ranks of the procession and the midst of the Children of Mary, Jeanne Marie de Fontenay had taken her place. She wore her white dress and blue sash and advanced quietly amidst the legion of virgins, singing with her companions:

Un souffle de grâce
Pousse vers ce lieu ;
Ce souffle qui passe
Est celui de Dieu !
Ave, Ave, Ave, Maria !
Ave, Ave, Ave, Maria !

XXXIII.

About five o'clock that evening I was standing near the Grotto, when a considerable group of pilgrims who

knew that I had been present in the morning at the miraculous cure, gathered round to interrogate me and ask me to tell them all about it. They were anxious to hear an eye-witness who could say: "That is what I saw myself!"

Having answered all their questions, I withdrew to seek a little solitude after the emotions of the day. A stranger then detached himself from the crowd and with some hesitation approached me. He was an Englishman.

"Sir," he said, "I am a tourist travelling in the Pyrenees to admire." . . .

"And you find yourself in a country worthy of admiration, do you not?" . . .

"Very beautiful! Very splendid! But I came to Lourdes as an unbeliever ready to sneer and mock at everything,"

"Well?"

"Well, sir, on arriving the day before yesterday I read the history of the events which had determined this Pilgrimage. And now I have just been listening to you relating the miraculous cure with which the whole town is ringing to-day. I feel that I am beginning to turn, that a change is taking place in me. Oh! tell me, sir, what I ought to do?"

"Why, turn altogether! Yes! altogether: the hour of complete conversion is come."

But it was easier said than done. The Englishman, who was Catholic by birth, had been for many years a stranger to religion, and though he was shaken by the evidence of facts, he still endeavoured by some few hostile arguments to escape the grasp of the grace of

God, which had seized him and was drawing him towards the Truth. I tried to make him understand that Providence itself had attracted him to the Grotto of the Apparitions, and rendered him the almost direct witness of the miracle due to the intercession of Mary on purpose to bring him back to his first faith.

"But if I make up my mind to follow your advice," he said at last, "to what priest can I open my heart?"

"To the one you prefer: they can all receive the avowal of your faults and absolve you from them. . . . However, it is always preferable, even at the Holy Tribunal, to seek the direction of those ministers of God who appear the best and the most enlightened. Go to the Curé of Lourdes, or the Abbé de Musy, or the Abbé Sire." . . .

"The Abbé de Musy?" he interrupted; "the one they say has also been miraculously cured, and who said mass for that young girl?"

"The same."

"Ah! His sermon to-day in the Basilica, where I entered by chance and out of curiosity, seemed to me very eloquent."

"Would you like me to introduce you to him?"

He accepted. As we were entering Lourdes, we crossed a passer-by whom I recognised.

"You see that tall man?" I said to the Englishman.

"Yes," he replied, a little surprised.

"Well," I continued, "that man was converted this day last year, after the Abbé de Musy's miraculous cure. . . . He went alone along the road we are following, and he went where you are going."

The Englishman was much struck. He felt as though

surrounded by the mysterious action of the Supernatural. We arrived at the Abbé de Musy's lodgings and asked for him. He came out of the little drawing-room, and supposing that we were simply making a call, he said :

"Alas ! I am very sorry, but I am with someone whom I cannot leave. We shall see each other again, this evening or to-morrow."

"No ! no !" I cried hastily, "no delay ! I am not come to day, *Monsieur l'Abbé*, simply for the pleasure of seeing you ; and it is not I who wish for an interview. . . . Think of this day last year, the same Feast of the Assumption. The day which commenced, for you, by a physical cure, terminated for another by a cure of a higher order. Do you miss nothing to-day ?" . . .

Then pointing to the Englishman who stood a little behind, anxious and agitated, and seeming to struggle with himself, I added :

"There is your evening harvest !"

And I left them together.

The next day but one, at the altar before which Jeanne had been cured, the Englishman received Holy Communion at the hands of the Abbé de Musy.

And a few days later, also kneeling at the foot of the Holy Tabernacle, the Countess du Boulay's maid abjured Protestantism. Her name, Madame Lefèvre, is written in the registers of the Pilgrimage.

XXXIV.

Jeanne could not make up her mind to leave Lourdes ; she wanted to make a noveno of gratitude there.

The happy news had been carried by telegrams to Autun, where her father, her family, the good Superior, and their friends received it with transports of joy : to the château of Dammartin where the Viscountess de Froissard Brossia sang her *Nunc dimittis* . . . Henry de Fontenay, who had not been able to go with his sister, started immediately to rejoin her at Lourdes, desiring to see her for himself without loss of time and join with her in thanking the Mother of God who had granted their prayers.

The ceremony of the benediction of the bells of the Basilica took place on the morrow of Jeanne's cure and attracted an immense crowd of spectators. His Eminence Cardinal Donnet, Archbishop of Bordeaux, and their Lordships, Mgr. Langénieux, Bishop of Tarbes, Mgr. D'Outremont, Bishop of Agen, Mgr. Epivent, Bishop of Aire, wished to make the acquaintance of the young girl healed by a miracle. She went to see them at the Bishops' Cottage* and answered all their questions.

During the course of that week, several other miracles, equally touching and amazing, took place at Lourdes ; † indeed, that Octave of the Assumption in 1874 might be said to have brought back the gospel times. Those who had been favoured by a miracle came and went in the midst of the crowd ; they had but one heart and

* Concerning the Bishops' Cottage, see Appendix, Note III.

† Angèle Lesbroussarl, de Valompierre (Oise), Marie Labonne, de Montpazier (Dordogne), a girl of fifteen, brought to Lourdes by her father, and Mr. P. Hughes, a banker of Toronto, Canada, suddenly recovered their health.

one spirit, and that little corner of the earth was, as it were, bathed in rays of heavenly light.

XXXV.

Towards the last days of August, a group of five or six persons entered the church of Paray-le-Monial. A graceful young girl of firm straight figure and supple movements went first. Her blue dress, fastened round the waist by a cord and tassels, seemed to be a gala toilet, and her whole expression was that of a calm felicity.

She knelt before the Sanctuary, bowed her head and became absorbed in earnest prayer. . . . Her mother, her two brothers, and a maid-servant bent with infirmities had taken their places on chairs behind her.

While they were thus prostrate, an elderly gentleman, who had come to Paray in the last train, opened the church door and advanced up the nave. On perceiving the young girl he silently raised his hands to heaven in a burst of unutterable gratitude. His wife and sons remained motionless, although they were strongly tempted to go and embrace him.

The young girl, however, was so absorbed in prayer that she had not heard his step. He therefore quietly went up and tremblingly knelt beside her.

Who can tell the intensity of Jeanne's feelings when she saw him thus praying at her side? She leant her head on her good father's shoulder as though overwhelmed with happiness, and began to weep. Her father's burning tears fell on her brow, and thus they

remained some little time in gratitude and thanksgiving before God. But how exquisite must have been the meeting of that family all united once more after the miracle, in that blessed Temple that men have dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ!

XXXVI.

Jeanne has resumed the usual current of her life. Six months after her cure, in giving an official account of her state, she says :—"Not only have I never been ill again, but my general health gets stronger every day. As for my inward complaint, the Blessed Virgin *cured it instantaneously*, and since the 15th of August, I have been able to stand up for hours together, and walk and run like other people. I can often be seen walking along the streets of the town; and I am proud and happy to wear the livery of the Blessed Virgin, and proclaim her mercy aloud. For the last three months I have been nursing my mother, who is ill, and in consequence have had, at the same time, to superintend the house. My family, the doctors, and the strangers who come to see me, are amazed at my robust health; they never could have thought it possible for me to bear so much fatigue. How thankful I should be if these details might console the sick and suffering, and give them entire confidence in the compassionate Virgin of Lourdes! I suffered so much and for so long—I had so many physical and moral weaknesses, that, *feeling myself now full of health and strength*, I should like to bring all those who suffer to the feet of *her who has so perfectly cured me!*"

Mlle. de Fontenay walks a good deal. Her frame seems inaccessible to fatigue, and nothing remains to remind her of the inward wound of which the disastrous effects had reduced her, for so many years, to the state of an infirm or paralytic person. All the ills which were cured in her were perfectly cured, and yet sometimes she suffers from violent neuralgia and sick headache, which the doctors she has consulted have been powerless to remove.

"I know what causes these pains in my head," said Jeanne.

"What?"

"When I bathed in the Piscina, it was not thought prudent, because of the thickness of my hair, to put my head under the water as well as my body. I am persuaded that that worldly preoccupation, and that want of faith *on one point*, was an obstacle *on that same point* to the grace of God. Therefore, while I make it my duty to seek to cure my headaches by natural means, I bear with resignation those consequences of my doubt which serve to strengthen my faith still more; and I willingly accept the little trial that God has seen fit to send me in the place of the great trial from which it pleased Him to release me."

XXXVII.

Mgr. Langénieux, bishop of Tarbes, has given permission for a commemorative stone to be let into the stone floor of the Grotto of Lourdes, bearing the following inscription:—

15TH AUGUST, 1874.
 ON THE FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTION
 OF THE MOST BLESSED VIRGIN MARY,
 Mlle. JEANNE-MARIE DE FONTENAY
 OF THE
 DIOCESE OF AUTUN
 WAS CURED.

“Go, and as thou hast believed so be it done unto thee. And the servant was healed at the same hour.”

—*St. Matthew, viii. 13.*

There is in the Cathedral of Autun a lateral chapel, more frequented than any other; indeed, it is, in some sort, the religious centre of the diocese. It is called the Bishops' Chapel, and beneath its pavement sleep the bishops who have succeeded each other in the episcopal chair of Autun. All round the walls are black marble slabs let in, bearing engraved on their surface the names of these successors of the Apostles. . . .

In the midst of those funereal mementos, a large white marble ex-voto stands out in prominent relief. It is placed there to remind the reader, not of those overtaken by death, but of one miraculously restored to life. Three years of trial having satisfactorily proved beyond all doubt the permanent character of the miraculous favour accorded by the Blessed Virgin to Mlle. de Fontenay, the Bishop of Autun gave the necessary authorisation by episcopal ordinance, for the erection of the ex-voto. We here reproduce the memorable inscription engraved upon it:—

FOR EVER.

THE 15TH OF EVERY MONTH AT HALF-PAST EIGHT IN THE
MORNING, A MASS OF THANKSGIVING,
TO MARY IMMACULATE,
IN GRATITUDE FOR THE RECOVERY
OF M^{LLE}. JEANNE-MARIE DE FONTENAY,
OBTAINED AT LOURDES,
THE 15TH AUGUST, 1874.

IN PIOUS REMEMBRANCE OF MONSEIGNEUR DE LÉSÉLEUC,
BISHOP OF AUTUN.

THIS FOUNDATION,
ACCEPTED BY THE CHAPTER OF THE CATHEDRAL,
HAS BEEN AUTHORISED BY AN EPISCOPAL ORDINANCE
OF THE 2ND AUGUST, 1877.

WITH THE CONDITION
THAT IT SHALL BE ANNOUNCED EVERY YEAR,
ON THE SUNDAY BEFORE THE ASSUMPTION,
AT THE TWO PRINCIPAL MASSES,
AND SHALL BE SAID
IN THE BISHOPS' CHAPEL.

XXXVIII.

Jeanne's feelings of eternal gratitude are shared by all her family ; which, though already religious, became after the miracle still more profoundly Christian.

Soon after receiving their daughter a second time from the hands of God, M. and Mme. de Fontenay experienced the tearful joy of offering to the Sovereign

Master a precious jewel from their treasure, a ripe fruit from their garden. In the month of November of that same year, 1874, their youngest son, whom we have seen serving the mass of the miracle, was invested at Saint Acheul with the habit of novice in the Company of Jesus. To-day he is called Father Joseph de Fontenay, and has had the glory of being expelled by the founders of our liberties. "Blessed are they," says our Lord, "who suffer persecution for justice' sake."

As for Jeanne, she often went back to Lourdes to thank her Benefactress and receive Mgr. Peyramale's blessing. The Curé of the Apparitions had become her adviser, her supreme director, her spiritual father.

Alas! There came a day when she found him no more and when, if she desired to ask for his help and his prayers, she had to kneel at a tomb.*

One of Mlle. de Fontenay's greatest pleasures is to employ her newly-recovered strength in the service of the sick. At one of the last Pilgrimages she passed two or three nights in the train, getting out at every station and going from carriage to carriage to minister to the necessities of the sick pilgrims; and on arriving at Lourdes, she still continued on that miraculous soil her laborious office of Sister of Charity.

At the moment of writing the last lines of this narra-

* It was a terrible blow to her when she heard of the death of the Servant of Mary, with whose cruel sufferings she was well acquainted. "The martyrdom of his last years had attained its extreme limit." She wrote us, "I am angry with myself for weeping. . . . I ought rather to sing the *Te Deum* for his deliverance. But will Lourdes still be Lourdes without him? He was the depositary of the actual traditions. With him one felt oneself at home. His blessing brought happiness with it; his counsels were joyfully followed." . . .

tive, we have just met her at Lourdes, during the anniversary month of her deliverance. Helping those who suffer as she once suffered, bathing them piously in the miraculous water, experiencing the inexpressible joy of seeing some of them cured as she was once cured herself, she puts into practice the sacred precept: "Show to others the mercy that God has shown to thee".*

LES BRETOUX, 8th September, 1882.

On the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin.

* See Appendix, Note IV.

THE NOVENO OF THE CURÉ OF ALGIERS.*

To M. Henri Lasserre, Paris.

BEAUNE, 1st December, 1877.

MONSIEUR,

Madame Guerrier and myself have read the manuscript you were good enough to send us, and in which you relate the circumstances of her cure on the 16th of September of this year, at the Sanctuary of Lourdes.

We have both much pleasure in witnessing to the truth of your narration, which is, on every point, perfectly exact. All the facts you describe are *true*, *trûe* in their every detail, and *true* in their general bearings.

Receive, Monsieur, the assurance of our distinguished sentiments.

ED. GUERRIER.

JUSTINE GUERRIER.
née Biver.

* This narrative was printed separately, a few years ago, under the title of "The Miracle of the 16th of September, 1877," as an extract from the second volume we were then preparing, and which we now publish.

CHAPTER I.

I.

Towards the month of August, 1874, the Canon Martignon, former Curé and Arch-priest of Algiers, arrived at Lourdes. He was a man about forty years of age, and had fallen ill on the African soil, of an affection of the chest and throat, by which he had lost his voice. Having heard of the miracles accomplished at Lourdes, he had crossed the Mediterranean and reached the town of Mary, in the hope that he also might obtain a part in those signal graces. He knelt and prayed at the Rocks of Massabiella, he bathed in the Piscina, and drank at the miraculous spring: but the cure so fervently desired descended not from Heaven.

"Come! Come!" said he to himself. "No discouragement! A few short prayers are not enough; we must knock often if we want the door opened to us. Let us make a Noveno!"

The noveno was begun and ended without any visible amelioration in his health, but the Canon's faith and hope remained unshaken.

"I will make a noveno of weeks," said he.

And he settled at Lourdes for a stay of sixty-three days. On the sixty-fourth day, however, finding himself in exactly the same state, he went for a short time to Pau, hoping that the mildness of the climate might give him relief. But soon he reproached himself with his flight

from Lourdes, as a weakness and a want of confidence. Besides, in the secret of his heart he felt an indefectible presentiment, that sooner or later the Blessed Virgin would yield to his supplications and answer his prayers.

Animated by that thought, he hastened back to the privileged Grotto, and established himself in the town in a less temporary manner, taking root there, so to speak, from that time.

Sick himself, he constituted himself the sick-nurse of others ; and such pilgrims as made a stay of any length at Lourdes at the epoch of which we are treating, will surely remember having remarked there a priest, still young, with a long fair beard, a bright soft eye, a distinguished air, and a tall frail figure, thin and with narrow shoulders, a little bent with suffering. A priest who led the blind, gave his arm to the halt and maimed to bring them to the Piscina, and employed the remains of his lost voice in consoling the afflicted. That priest was the Abbé Martignon.

“If the Blessed Virgin does not grant my prayers this time,” said he, smiling, “I am resolved to make a noveno of years, and after that, a noveno of centuries. Then I will stop.”

He had the joy and consolation of witnessing the miraculous cure of several of the sick persons whose guide and support he had been ; but for himself, though he felt a slight relief from time to time, he did not receive the supernatural gift so ardently desired, of a complete cure of his disease.

Did he then begin to have an intuition of some secret reluctance on the part of the Blessed Virgin to grant him the grace he solicited ? We cannot tell. But it

almost seemed that if his faith was still the same, and his charity ever increasing, the virtue of hope was turning little by little into the virtue of resignation, or to speak more exactly, his hope was adjourned. Happy in being able to remain in that corner of the earth where the Queen of Heaven had rested her feet ; contented in breathing the sacred atmosphere, and in going every day to pray before the sacred Grotto, he deferred the noveno of years and centuries, of which he had smilingly spoken, and said to us one day :

“I stay here at the orders of Our Lady of Lourdes. She will grant my prayers when she pleases. I am like a person sitting in an ante-room, and waiting for an audience. My turn will come. I shall have my hour or my minute, and I shall not let it escape.”

He waited for that minute or that hour during three years. But after the expiration of those three years, he was interiorly inspired to knock again at the celestial door ; and in the course of the year 1877, he resolved to make, in the month of September, a new noveno that should terminate on the Feast of Our Lady of Seven Dolours. He had not, however, observed that, the Feast being a movable one, the first day of the noveno would coincide with the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, and that, in consequence, his prayer would extend in a certain way from the birth of Mary to the last sigh of Jesus, from the cradle of the Mother to the tomb of the Son.*

* The Feast of Our Lady of Seven Dolours is celebrated the third Sunday in September. And that year, 1877, the third Sunday being the 16th September, it fell on the ninth day after that of the Nativity, which is on the 8th of September.

II.

Why, then, did not Mary immediately grant the prayers and wishes of the Abbé Martignon? Why had she not restored health, strength and voice to one who loved her with such filial tenderness and spoke of her with such eloquence? Perhaps there was some hidden reason for it. Might it be our privilege to suspect the nature of that secret cause and seek the solution of it in our Mother's heart? If the Abbé Martignon had been cured, he would have left the neighbourhood of the Grotto and resumed his sacred ministry in some town of Algeria; but being ill he remained at Lourdes and accomplished his admirable office of mercy, in which he edified those who saw him by the grand preaching of his example infinitely more than he could ever have done by the most eloquent sermons from his lips.

Therefore we imagine, that if the Virgin did not immediately grant the cure so much desired, it was because she would not suffer such a servant to depart too soon. The service of God lost nothing, it seems to us, by this arrangement, and the Servant of God lost nothing either. When God refuses to grant our prayers, or keeps us waiting for some temporal grace we have asked Him for, it is because, instead of the little quantity of dross we have desired, He is preparing us a hundredfold more in pure gold either in this world or in the next.

Besides, it was not long before, in his zeal and ardent charity, the Abbé Martignon took a fresh mission on himself, which was the natural result of his self-imposed functions of consoler of the afflicted.

From the commencement of his sojourn at Lourdes, he had met a man whose sufferings and trials exceeded the ordinary sum of human afflictions. He had been prominently brought forward in the most considerable religious event of our times; he had been distinguished by the incredible honour of receiving a message from Heaven, and accomplishing the divine commands in spite of every obstacle. But the Blessed Virgin, desiring, doubtless, to prepare him a still higher place, had said, "I will show him how he must learn to suffer for love of me". And the most unexpected tribulations had then tortured his heroic heart.

By a strange and striking contrast he was, at one and the same time, on Calvary and on Mount Thabor. While his name was famous in every Christian land, and while the great family of his Parish, whose beloved Father and Patriarch he was, prayed for blessings on him, he experienced from another quarter (especially of late years) the bitter pain of being misunderstood, neglected, and secretly persecuted in what was dearest to him, his zeal for the welfare of his people, and for the house of the Lord. Like the Cyrenian he carried the Cross, and his robust shoulders were torn and bleeding from the weight of the sacred burden. Around his sufferings, as once around those of his Master, many wagged their heads, and said: "Since he was Mary's instrument, let her deliver him and come to his help". At the period of the Apparitions of the Mother of God at the Grotto of Lourdes, now nearly twenty years ago, he had prayed the Blessed Virgin to make roses blossom in the season of snows. But Our Lady of Lourdes, who in that same spot purposed to work such numberless miracles, had

refused that particular one to the priest she had chosen, and had answered his request by the austere word "Penance!" Roses are not for the cold winter of this world. Mary reserves them for her elect, her servants, her friends, in the eternal Spring that succeeds to death. The illustrious Abbé Peyramale, the great Curé of Lourdes, the priest of the Immaculate Conception, had therefore been condemned to suffer.

He understood it himself, and here we cannot resist quoting some of his own reflections. They treat of the dispositions of Providence in the ordering of trouble and Dolour. A pious person whose conscience he directed and who took note of his counsels with scrupulous care, has been good enough to lend us the little volume in which he had carefully noted the advice and instruction received from time to time at the Sacred Tribunal. It is easy to retrace in what he taught others the precepts and rules he must have applied to his own case every day of his life. Here are some of his sayings:—

"Let us suffer with strength and courage, and even with joy, so as to insure our election, as Saint Paul says! . . . Yes! when a soul has been faithful, and the great God Who sounds the heart and reins, sees that He can depend upon that soul, never to abandon Him; after having visited it by graces which are the forerunners of the severest trials, He hides Himself and gives it up a prey to its own personal weakness and misery; to annoyances, to desolation, to opprobrium; sometimes even to slander, contempt and calumny."

"Then let that soul learn to suffer and be still; God

is at hand: He will not lose sight of it, for He loves it. And yet, in vain will it seek Him, call Him, sigh for that unique Bridegroom who alone is its joy and delight. He appears deaf and dumb. It is His will to be sought for and pursued, and when you think you hold Him—He is gone! . . . But, one day, like a child hidden behind a door and being sought by those he loves, He will open heaven to you with a smile, rejoicing at having forced you to acquire merits that you would have allowed to escape if you had had your own way.”

“When God sees a faithful and generous soul, His eye is always on it; He reserves it for heaven and purposes to turn it into one of the most precious stones of the Eternal City. He employs the hammer and chisel to shape it, and in spite of its cries, He subjects it to a cruel discipline. If it remains faithful to Him in the midst of so many afflictions, He rewards it by increasing them; if it shows itself still constant and generous, He weighs it down with other and greater trials; and if it continues to persevere, and instead of abandoning Him, exhibits its readiness to accept everything, how does He testify His satisfaction? He sends it tortures that are sometimes intolerable, and such as He reserves for heroic hearts alone: that is His highest reward. He treats the soul as He treated His Son Jesus, for He considers it as His own child, and He loves it too well not to lavish on it all that is most precious on earth: suffering, humiliation, and affliction. *But in this chaos of trouble, the soul is united to God for all eternity.* What should that tried, afflicted soul do?

Remember that God loves it and never voluntarily doubt Him for one single instant."

Such was the man, such was the priest of whom the Abbé Martignon had been, for the last few years, the filial comforter and the unfailing friend.

Another ecclesiastic seconded him in that noble work. The Abbé Lafont, chaplain at the hospital of Tarbes, had been a friend of the Curé of the Apparitions from childhood. He was a man of God, filled with courage, ardour and faith, ready for every sacrifice and of immovable fidelity. Efforts were made to estrange him from the Curé of Lourdes. It was said to him, "You will make yourself powerful enemies!" "What!" he cried, "give up Peyramale and betray him when he is persecuted! Never!" . . .

He passed humbly and simply the life he had devoted to Jesus Christ in the persons of the sick and poor: *Christo in pauperibus*.

Monseigneur Peyramale, the Abbé Lafont, and the Abbé Martignon were three friends after God's own heart.

III.

It is not our intention to expose here the weight of sorrow beneath which succumbed the venerable priest, of whom Mgr. Langénieux in one of his letters addressed to him had said that "Our Lady of Lourdes had chosen him for her confidant, her witness, and her apostle in the marvels of her Apparitions".*

* Letter from Mgr. Langénieux, Bishop of Tarbes, dated the 22nd August, 1873. This letter is in our possession.

We will simply recall to mind that when the Basilica of the Grotto,—enriched with gifts from all parts of the world—was finished, the Basilica which formed the goal of the processions demanded by the Blessed Virgin; the Curé Peyramale undertook to rebuild the parish church which was to be their starting-point. He sank under the task without having been able to complete it.

He had often spoken of his approaching death as a thing of necessity and a supreme sacrifice to be offered in the interests of the House of God.

The works of the unfinished church were stopped when the roof was reached, for the help on which he had counted failed him, and the most amazing hostility had trammelled his efforts.

“I shall not enter into the promised land,” he would say sometimes, “I shall only see it from afar. I must die to ward off impending ruin. When I am gone every difficulty will be smoothed away. My death will pay all debts.”

These melancholy words brought the tears to his own eyes as well as to the eyes of those who listened to him and loved him. We had the sorrowful consolation of being present at his departure from this world, and we intend to relate, in the history of his life, how it pleased God to choose the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin as the day on which He opened to His servant the gates of Eternity.

On the day of the Nativity the Incomparable Virgin, whom the Office of the Immaculate Conception shows us as present at the Councils of the Most High, had appeared, shining with innocence and glory amongst the shadows of this world; and on the day of the Nativity

the Curé of Lourdes quitted those shadows to enter into the glory of the heavenly country. Around Mgr. Peyramale's bed were grouped his brother, his relatives, his curates, his friends, and all those of his people who could obtain admission into the room of the Man of God. The intimate friend of the last few years, the Abbé Martignon, was there, in the midst of the weeping family, broken down with grief and thinking neither of himself, nor his illness, nor his cure, nor even of his Noveno to Our Lady of Seven Dolours, which, by a strange coincidence, he was going to begin that very day.

IV.

After a long agony, Mgr. Peyramale breathed his last sigh upon earth, and yielded his immortal soul into the hands of God, leaving his faithful friend the good Canon of the African capital alone in the world. Not but what he still had a father in his venerable and beloved Archbishop of Algiers, Mgr. Lavigerie, but was he certain ever to see him again, and was he not too ill to undertake the journey? . . . At that hour of sorrow and solitude, his soul turned towards the invisible regions in which, henceforth, dwelt the Servant of Mary. And in raising his heart to the Comforter of the afflicted he recalled the projected noveno, and remembered that that day, the 8th of September, was precisely the first day of it. What then passed in his soul? Kneeling beside the deathbed and holding the inanimate hand of the Curé of Lourdes in both his own, he remained a moment prostrate and silent.

Then he rose and said to several of those present, the curates of the parish, the writer of these lines, and others :

“ I have just made the first prayer of my noveno to Our Lady of Seven Dolours. In asking for my cure beside these sacred remains, I conjure Our Lady of Lourdes *to permit that on the ninth day our friend shall communicate the answer to me, himself, in her name.*”

Then he added :

“ The choice that it has pleased God to make of the 8th of September, to recall to himself the Curé of the Apparitions, is a sufficient authorisation for me to associate my humble supplications with his memory.”

They asked the Abbé Martignon what inscription should be engraved on the tomb of the Servant of Mary. He replied through his tears :

“ Engrave these two verses from the Sacred Scriptures: — ‘ *Domine, dilexi decus domus tuæ*: Lord, I have loved the beauty of Thy house. *Zelus domus tuæ comedit me*: The zeal of Thy house hath eaten me up.’ The first text is the history of his life ; the second, the history of his death.”

The master has quitted the earth. What will be the fate of the two disciples, the two friends, the two priests, who remain here below in this valley of tears ? They look to heaven for help. *Quid aspicietis in cælum, viri Galilei ?*

V.

On the evening of the obsequies of Mgr. Peyramale, and after having been present at them, bathed in tears,

his old friend, the Abbé Lafont, came to see us, and said :

“He is gone ! What will become of us now ?”

It happened that on his return to Tarbes, the following day, the Abbé Lafont, who was chaplain of the hospital there, was present at a great fire. The house called the *Little Convent*, in the rue Saint Louis, was in flames. He rushed forward to help to save the children, and remove the Blessed Sacrament to a place of safety, when he was struck dead by the falling of a piece of a burning wall. He went to rejoin in the bosom of God the friend for whom he had wept the previous day.

Thus, entering into eternal life by a sublime act of self-devotion, Mgr. Peyramale's first friend, the friend of early days, departed this world immediately after the Servant of Mary.

The more recent friend, the Abbé Martignon, still remained.

VI.

A great hope as well as a great sorrow had filled the soul of the sick priest beside the death-bed of the Servant of Mary. Assuredly the thought of being cured could in no way alleviate his affliction, for no personal consideration could attenuate his grief at the loss of his friend. But feeling himself henceforth alone in the world, it was pleasant to know that his protector was in heaven, and that doubtless, after God and the Blessed Virgin, it would be to his intervention that he would owe the grace he had so long solicited.

It seemed to him that with such an intercessor, the Blessed Virgin would, *on the ninth day*, become perfectly accessible and favourable to his prayers. He even wrote to Paris, to the R. F. Picard, Superior General of the Assumption, to tell him of his hope, or rather of his certainty of being cured.

He already began to talk of what he should do when he was restored to health, and how he should employ himself in the Curé Peyramale's unfinished work. In the midst of his mourning and tears, he enjoyed by anticipation the sweets of recovered health, strength and voice.

He prayed fervently, and many friends united their prayers to his. In this manner he reached the 15th of September—the eve of Our Lady of Seven Dolours, and the eve of the *ninth day*.

In the morning of the 15th, which was a Saturday, he received a telegram informing him of the departure of M. and Mme. Guerrier for Lourdes, and asking him to be good enough to meet them at the station with a carriage.

M. and Mme. Guerrier were entirely unknown to him. A letter he had received by post from the Curé of Saint-Gobain, twenty-four hours before the arrival of the telegram, had informed him simply that Mme. Guerrier had suffered for many years from a painful disease, and that she was coming to Lourdes to pray for a cure in which she had absolute faith. The lady and her husband were warmly recommended to the Abbé Martignon, as they were visiting Lourdes for the first time.

The Canon willingly accepted the charitable errand,

and directed his steps towards the station in time for the three o'clock train.

We will leave him for a few moments bending over his Breviary, and reading his Office in the waiting-room, while we reveal to the reader by what series of circumstances it happened that M. and Mme. Guerrier arrived at Lourdes on that particular day.

CHAPTER II.

I.

M. Edward Guerrier, Justice of the Peace at Beaune, had about fifteen years before married a most excellent and Christian young lady, Mlle. Justine Biver.

Mlle. Biver belonged to an honourable family. Her father was an eminent doctor, her brothers occupied important commercial positions. One of them was General Director of the Company of Saint-Gobain, the other Director of the celebrated Manufactory of Looking-glasses of Saint-Gobain and Chauny.

Heaven had blessed their union. Three children were born in due order, all healthy and strong. They were brought up beneath their mother's eye, and cherished by her watchful care. She taught them their first lessons of human knowledge, but above all, she taught them the love of the poor, and the knowledge of God.

In this way eleven years of uninterrupted happiness passed away. Eleven years of unbroken felicity is a very short time, and a very long time too! . . . It is short! For happy days pass so rapidly that they seem to last but an instant. It is long! For seldom is it that such a period of time passes in this vale of tears without being marked, here and there, by trouble or catastrophe.

But about the year 1874, this clear horizon was sud-

denly clouded over. Mme. Guerrier's health began rapidly to give way. Violent headaches were succeeded by frequent fainting fits, and by a gradually increasing weakness, which finally degenerated into a state of general paralysis, spreading successively to all the most important organs. The spine lost its strength, the legs refused all movement, the sight became weak and defective. Mme. Guerrier could not sit up in bed, and was obliged to remain always in a horizontal position. The lower part of the body fell, at last, into a state of absolute insensibility; not only were the feet and legs incapable of motion, but if they were pinched or pricked with a needle the patient did not feel it. Several times during her long fainting fits they feared she would suddenly pass away. Death stood on the threshold and threw its threatening shadow on the once happy home.

The poor mother had been obliged to give up superintending the education of her children, and could only now be present at their intercourse with God. She gathered them round her bed morning and night, and heard them pray and ask for her recovery.

II.

Her illness had lasted about two years, and they were in 1876. The eldest daughter Alice was to make her first Communion on the 2nd of April. And that great day on which the child was to receive her God was the all-absorbing preoccupation of the Christian mother. She thought of it for her daughter and also a little for herself, for it seemed to her impossible that in coming to take possession of her child's heart the merci-

ful Saviour should not bring some relief for her own sufferings, and leave some royal sign of His visit and sojourn in the house. Did He not, when in the olden times He entered the house of Simon Peter, order Peter's mother-in-law, who was lying ill, to rise and serve them? "I am certain," said Mme. Guerrier, "that I shall rise and walk on that day."

On the 2nd of April, Alice received the body and blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ for the first time; and in the evening, a cordial dinner was offered to the priest who had prepared the young girl, and to a few members of the family. But no change had taken place in the mother's state and her seat remained empty as it had been for so long, when—at the very moment that dinner was served—Mme. Guerrier suddenly recovered her strength, rose, dressed and appeared in the midst of the guests, who were bewildered with delight and astonishment. Her sight was clear and distinct, her spine straight and supple, and her legs able to bear her weight as in bygone times.

The priest intoned a hymn of thanksgiving to which all responded. They instinctively felt that He who in the morning had given Himself in the divine banquet was invisibly present at the evening repast. During the night Mme. Guerrier's sleep was deep and sweet, but, alas! on the morrow when she tried to rise, her legs had fallen into their former inert condition.

III.

Was it, then, nothing but a dream and an illusion that on the evening before she had been in perfect.

health, done the honours of the repast and celebrated the happiest day that had ever yet dawned on her daughter's life? Was it an effort of imagination, a nervous movement, as the doctors say?—No, no, nothing of the kind.

The Master of life and death, of health and sickness, had so disposed all things that it was impossible not to recognise His hand, impossible to attribute to nature what was indeed the effect of His grace.

On the day of the daughter's first Communion He would not disappoint the mother's hope and faith; touching her with His divine finger, He had commanded her to rise and serve the guests as he had formerly done to Simon Peter's mother-in-law. But after having shown by this manifestation of His power, that He was the Sovereign Dispenser of life and health, He suffered it to be understood that, for some hidden reason known to Himself alone, His purpose was to let her still bear the weight of trial. And in order to mark still more clearly that He alone had ruled these events, He ordained that while the legs fell back into their old state of infirmity the upper part of the body should be no longer subject to disease. The intolerable headaches and alarming fainting fits had disappeared, and the sight remained clear and strong.

The centurion of the gospel employed a just comparison when, in seeking to express the submission of nature to the almighty power of God, he likened it to the prompt and punctual obedience of military discipline. "I say to one, go, and he goeth; and to another, come, and he cometh; and to my servant, do this, and he doeth it."

Thus Jesus had commanded in a house of the French town of Beaune just as He had formerly commanded in the Jewish city of Capharnaum.

Like a chief who manœuvres his soldiers according to a plan of battle of which they are ignorant, He had said to the disease "Go!" He had said to it "Come!" He had said "Do this!" and at His word all was accomplished.

Why? What was the reason of that partial falling back after a radical cure. What was the mysterious plan followed by Our Lord? He alone could tell; and if the question had been asked Him with reference to Mme. Guerrier, He would doubtless have answered as He did about the man born blind: "It is that the works of God should be made manifest in her". Is it necessary to add that Mme. Guerrier's faith, which was already great, became greater still? Her soul had received grace from on high as well as her body. The clouds that had hid her husband, her children, and all whom she loved, from her sight, had been dispersed by a breath from heaven, and though still stretched on her bed, she was joyful and glad at heart.

IV.

Since the commencement of her illness she had never had the happiness of seeing her parents. She lived at Beaune in the Côte d'Or. Her father and mother dwelt at Saint-Gobain in the department of Aisne. A hundred and forty leagues separated the two towns. The worthy Dr. Biver was then in his eighty-second year, and travelling was difficult for him; but his daughter anxiously de-

sired to see him, and from the first days of April to the beginning of September her wish became stronger and more urgent.

Vainly her friends represented to her how difficult it was to move her and that so long a journey might throw her into a worse state; all these considerations gave way before the filial desire of once more pressing to her heart the mother who had fed her with her milk, and the father who had cradled her in his arms in the days of her infancy. The signal imprudence was therefore committed of allowing her to undertake the journey.

As the doctors had foreseen, the result was a considerable aggravation of her sufferings. The least movement, as, for example, when they tried to carry her from one room to another, produced frightful giddiness and nervous attacks; so that it was utterly impossible for the sick woman to make another railway journey to Beaune. She was therefore obliged to remain where she was.

The consequence of such a state of things and under such circumstances was the complete breaking up of the family. The functions of Justice of the Peace obliged the husband to stay in Beaune, the fatal bonds of infirmity and disease detained the wife at Saint-Gobain. Mme. Guerrier had asked to have her children with her, and every two or three months the magistrate made a hurried journey over a hundred and forty leagues of rail, to pass a day or two with his beloved ones. About a year passed in this way.

They watched anxiously for a moment of respite when a slight amelioration might permit them to risk taking the invalid home again to Beaune; but so far from any

improvement, she got gradually worse, and a commencement of paralysis manifested itself in the left arm. The thought of her return was rendered still more alarming by the experience of her departure.

V.

One day in the month of August, M. Guerrier was at Saint-Gobain, in despair at a situation from which there seemed no way of escape, when his wife said to him:

"I want to go on a pilgrimage to Lourdes. I shall be cured there."

These words startled and alarmed the husband. They presented the most harassing perspective to his mind, and he strongly opposed an idea which he felt must infallibly result in a fatal issue.

"My dear wife," he answered, "you are asking for impossibilities. See what have been the consequences of yielding to your wish and letting you come to Saint-Gobain, eleven months ago. You, who cannot even bear to be drawn round the garden in an invalid chair, would you be mad enough to risk a journey right through France, to a place where we know nobody, and with the probability of never being able to come back? Do not think of it for a moment. It would be tempting God and rushing into unknown dangers."

"I am certain I shall be cured at Lourdes," said Mme. Guerrier, "and I want to go."

It was the struggle of reason against faith and hope. A struggle that lasted several days.

Mme. Guerrier's confidence had at last influenced her brothers, the Directors of Saint-Gobain. They advised

M. Guerrier to let her have her own way, and the latter, weary of resistance, at last gave a reluctant consent. Having procured a certificate from the doctor testifying to the state of his wife's health, he obtained leave of absence for a few weeks to be able to accompany her to the Pyrenees.

The journey was finally decided on the Saturday, 8th of September, the Day of the Nativity.

What prayers rose from all their hearts to Our Lady of Lourdes on the day in which her noble servant the Curé Peyramale left this world to enter into the Realms of Justice, where the wicked receive their punishment, and the good are crowned with power and glory.

M. Guerrier was, however, rendered extremely anxious by the thought that in case of some painful eventuality, he should find himself in a strange town without other aid or help than the mercenary and careless services of hotel servants.

"How I wish," he often said, "that I knew some one at Lourdes, who could guide us a little. I am nervous at knowing nothing of the place." This passed on the 10th or 11th of September.

At that time the Abbé Poindron, Curé of Saint-Gobain, who often visited the family, read of Mgr. Peyramale's death in a newspaper; and in the account of his last moments, he observed the name of the Abbé Martignon, the former Curé of Algiers, of whom we have spoken at the beginning of this narrative. Immediately he hastened to call on Mme. Guerrier.

"You will find some one at Lourdes to receive you and guide you," he said to the husband; "I know the Abbé Martignon, and I will write and recommend you

to his care. Let him know the hour of your arrival by telegram. He will be expecting you."

VI.

The exact moment of the terrible departure was fixed for the Wednesday, 12th September. It was decided that they should rest at Paris for four-and-twenty hours, and then, if possible, go straight on to Lourdes without stopping. A sleeping-car was bespoken of the railway company.

In the family all was emotion and excitement. The invalid declared she should be cured, and her brothers, gained over by her faith, shared her confidence. Her husband, while yielding to his wife's wish, trembled with fear and anxiety. He saw only the material difficulties, whereas Mme. Guerrier seemed to ignore their existence. She looked to divine possibilities, and he to human probabilities. The children accustomed to hear nothing but the truth from their mother's lips, and easily disposed to believe, as one especially is at that age, in the realisation of their wishes, rejoiced in anticipation.

"Yes, yes, you will be cured," said the eldest girl.

Marie, the youngest, who never remembered seeing her mother otherwise than infirm and in bed, exclaimed :

"Mamma will come back to us like another mamma, and we shall have a mamma who can walk."

"And she will be able to take us on her lap," added Paul, whose little heart had often longed for that unattainable happiness.

At other times they were frightened at the long jour-

ney, which, to their childish imaginations, seemed endless, and at the thought of the weary days and nights they would pass without seeing their mother or receiving her caresses.

“Mother,” they said, “will you be able to send us your blessing from Lourdes?”

There are few things more painful than the doubts and hesitations which precede some important decision. Mme. Guerrier’s aged father had been spared them all, for it was only when everything had been settled and his consent alone was wanting, that his daughter acquainted him with her project of going to that distant sanctuary to ask of the Mother of God a cure, that human science had been powerless to accomplish. At this information, and before the supreme resource of turning from earthly means to resort only to heavenly intervention, the old doctor was deeply moved. Tears rose to his eyes.

“I consent to whatever you wish,” he said. And at the moment of her departure, he spread his venerable hands over his daughter and blessed her.

The journey could only be made at the cost of terrible suffering, and when Mme. Guerrier arrived at Paris, it was with the greatest difficulty they managed to get her to the apartment of her brother, M. Hector Biver.

Their brother-in-law, M. Louis Bonnel, professor at the College of Versailles, had come to meet them full of anxiety.

“I have been enquiring if M. Henri Lasserre is at Lourdes just now,” he said; “I knew him once in a club to which we both belonged, and I have brought you a letter for him.”

It was by these means that he, to whom God has granted the grace of relating this history, found himself naturally mixed up with its every detail.

On the morrow they resumed their journey, but notwithstanding the invalid's courage, she was so exhausted by the time the train entered the station at Bordeaux, that her husband, justly alarmed, insisted on her resting for a day before she went any further.

CHAPTER III.

I.

On Saturday the 15th of September, M. and Mme. Guerrier arrived at Lourdes. It will doubtless be remembered that the priest to whom they had been recommended, the Abbé Martignon, was waiting at the station to receive them. He was seated in the waiting-room, saying his Office, and thinking of the supreme Noveno on which he had concentrated all his hopes of recovery.

He called to mind the numbers of sick persons he had seen cured at the Grotto in the years he had been there, and he said to himself that his turn was now come, that the following day was the last of the Noveno, and that the Miracle he had asked for for so long would finally be accomplished. Time passes quickly in the company of hope, and thus the good canon had patiently awaited the arrival of the travelers with whom our readers are already acquainted, but whom he did not yet know. He had, however, got everything in readiness. A large and comfortable carriage was waiting in the yard of the railway station. The porters carried the sick woman and placed her in it, and they drove to the house of Mme. Detroyat in the Avenue of the station, where the Abbé Martignon had taken a room. But the room happened to be on the first or second floor, and Mme.

Guerrier's condition made it absolutely indispensable for her to have a room on the ground floor. The Canon of Algiers, not having been sufficiently informed on that point, could not naturally foresee the necessity of it, and therefore he found himself rather embarrassed.

"Never mind," he said to the hostess, "I will take them to M. Lavigne, close by. Perhaps he will be able to give us a room such as you wish for."

M. Lavigne is the owner of a pretty house embowered in shrubs and flowering plants. A latticed door painted green opens from the garden on to the high road that passes through Lourdes and forms the principal street of the town. The dwelling is situated in the lower part of the road between the town and the station.

The worthy M. Lavigne put himself at the disposal of the pilgrims with the best grace in the world. So, instead of stopping at Mme. Detroyat's or in one of the hotels, M. and Mme. Guerrier found themselves settled in M. Lavigne's house, in a large room on the ground floor, that opened on to the garden, and was turned into a bedroom for the occasion. Idle as these details may appear, they are not without use or importance, as will be seen later on.

In that room, Mme. Guerrier told the Abbé Martignon the story of her long sufferings, her incurable infirmities, and the confident hope that had brought her to Lourdes. They talked of the innumerable benefits of Our Lady of Lourdes, and of Mgr. Peyramale; the priest of Algiers let drop a few words about his Noveno, asking Mme. Guerrier to join in it, and cordially offering to pray for her intentions. . . . After resting some time, they went to the Grotto, M. Guerrier having engaged two

temporary domestics to help to carry Mme. Guerrier from the carriage to the foot of the statue of Mary. It was then about five o'clock.

At that time and in that place we had the honour of seeing her for the first time. M. Guerrier gave us his brother-in-law's letter, and acquainted us with the troubles of the family.

Mme. Guerrier's prayers were fervent and absorbed. She sat motionless, with her eyes seemingly fixed in ecstasy on the marble statue of the invisible Virgin who had formerly appeared in that place and whom she had come from so far to invoke. The expression of her face and the elevation of her hands, all expressed unshaken faith and hope.

II.

Before setting out on her journey, Mme. Guerrier had received absolution, and had, to the best of her power, disposed her soul effectually to implore the miraculous grace she had come to seek. She was ready. But her husband, although a sincere Christian, was a little behind-hand; for having had the weight of all the temporal preparations and anxieties, he had been less active in regulating his spiritual affairs. He had made all the arrangements for their departure, and regulated the different details of the journey with vigilant care, but he had put off preparing himself until the last hour and the decisive moment.

It was at Lourdes that the hour struck.

Late in the evening, M. Guerrier asked the Abbé Martignon to hear his confession; it being his intention

on the morrow to take his place at the Holy Table beside her whom he cherished; he wished their actions to be united, as were their hearts, and their prayers to ascend together to God.

Thus it was, that in the mystery of the Sacrament of Penance he opened his heart to the priest of Jesus Christ. He confessed his faults, he told him his troubles, his anxieties, the cloud that hung over his home, his uneasiness for the present, his alarm for the future. He wanted comfort and encouragement, and experience had taught him that, what the Church calls the "tribunal of Penance," is also the "tribunal of Consolation". The details of his confidence are the secret of God. We know, however, that the Confessor, who, for an instant, holds the place of the Almighty Father, and in His name utters words of mercy to all His creatures, often feels in a higher degree than ordinary men the sublime sentiment of pity, and the former Curé of Algiers was moved to compassion at the trials of the disconsolate husband; at the spectacle of that mother of three children condemned for so long to infirmity and inaction, and that little family still in such want of motherly care. He forgot his own ills in his sorrow for the ills of others. Not, however, that we wish it to be understood that he no longer remembered his own sufferings and the immense hopes he had founded on the morrow. On the contrary, he thought of it all. But a consideration of a higher order which had already presented itself to his mind, and of which he had vaguely spoken to Mme. Guerrier, rose in his heart and there took form and purpose. He hastened to give it his adhesion.

"Tell your wife to be full of confidence, and do not let yours fail either!" said he to his penitent, to the man who, in the sacred tribunal, called him "Father," and to whom he answered "My son". "I saw her praying this evening at the Grotto; she is one of those who triumph over the heart of God and conquer the Miracle." . . .

"I myself," he added, "am making a Noveno that I began at the deathbed where my friend the revered Curé of Lourdes had just expired. From that moment I have invoked his memory, and I have prayed Our Lady of Lourdes to permit that on *the ninth day* he may himself communicate to me the answer to my urgent request. We are just at the eve of that day. My *Noveno* was begun on the Saturday, 8th of September, and will finish to-morrow, Sunday, the Feast of Our Lady of Seven Dolours. To-morrow, then, I shall celebrate the Mass which is my last hope. . . . But do you tell Mme. Guerrier that not only will I say that Mass for her, but also, if I am to have any share in the manifest answer I solicit, that *I give up that share to her. I make her a free gift of all the anterior prayers of my Noveno, and I substitute her intentions for mine*, so that if the sign given on the ninth day be a cure, *it may be her cure and not mine*. Before she goes to sleep to-night, and when she wakes to-morrow morning, tell her to associate Mgr. Peyramale's name with her prayers; and come both of you to-morrow morning at eight o'clock to the Mass at the Basilica. I have great hopes that something good will happen."

M. and Mme. Guerrier, in accepting such an offer, could not measure the heroism and extent of the sacri-

fice made by the priest of Algiers. To do so they would have required to know the long history of his past life, and of that they were absolutely ignorant.

• III.

That evening, then, before closing her eyes, and on the morrow at the dawn of day, the incurably paralysed woman associated with her prayers the name of Mgr. Peyramale. A little before eight in the morning she was carried to the Basilica to be present at the last and supreme Mass of the Noveno, in which the Abbé Martignon expected to receive the mysterious answer of his deceased friend.

Mme. Guerrier was deeply imbued with the infallible and consoling teachings of the Church on the communion of Saints and the reversionary gift of Merits. In consequence, therefore, of the act of abnegation made in her favour by the Abbé Martignon, the feeling of confident faith that had brought her to the Grotto of Lourdes was strengthened so as to have become a positive certainty. Let us try to give an idea of it.

In this resort of peace and edification we are a long way from battlefields and sanguinary struggles, and yet we shall seek in the midst of camps a comparison that may adequately convey some idea of what was passing in a heart absorbed in prayer.

The Captain has started with his troops for the field of battle. He knows the place and the hour, the eagerness of his men and the arrangements of the enemy. He has encamped in the dusk of the evening, when misty shadows overspread the country, hiding every-

thing from his sight. But the place is well known to him, and he ranges his regiments and companies in perfect order. On the other side of a little river a faint noise of trampling and clicking of steel reveals to him the presence of the enemy he is burning to conquer. His heart beats, and in spite of himself he cannot help thinking of the small number of his soldiers, and the superior forces of the adversary. Suddenly the wind rises and disperses the mist. And then, the Captain perceives on the opposite bank, the army of an allied Prince who is come to fight in his cause, the army of a powerful Prince led to his help, through the mist, by a faithful friend. "Unexpected reinforcement! Invincible alliance! The Great Prince is on our side! We are sure of victory!" cries the Captain, beside himself with joy.

Thus in her secret heart was moved the Christian woman who had come to Lourdes without any other help than her own prayers and those of her family: thus did she glow with confident fervour when she found that, most unexpectedly, and at the request of a friend, the illustrious Servant of Mary, the venerated Curé Peyramale, would unite his powerful prayer to her humble supplication, and his strength to her weakness. She instinctively felt that she was on the eve of triumph.

IV.

The Basilica was almost entirely filled with the pilgrims arrived from Marseilles the previous day. It would have been extremely difficult to carry through such a dense crowd a sick person to whom the least

movement and the slightest shock were a source of fatigue and suffering. It was therefore decided that the Mass should be said in one of the two first chapels nearest the door. They chose the one to the left, dedicated to Saint Germaine Cousin; and to that chapel—whither so many unforeseen circumstances had directed their steps—Mme. Guerrier was conveyed. There the Abbé Martignon celebrated the Holy Sacrifice, taking care to reserve the suffrages of the *Memento* of the dead for the beloved lost friend whose memory was present to every heart. The invalid heard Mass seated on a chair with her helpless legs stretched on a prie-Dieu before her.

While the Abbé Martignon was reading the Epistle, the thought of Mgr. Peyramale suddenly presented itself to his mind with extraordinary clearness. In the last lines of the text before his eyes, he had seen the following words stand prominently out, and their startling application to actual circumstances impressed him forcibly, as he slowly read them.

“The Lord hath so magnified thy name this day, that thy praise shall not depart out of the mouth of men who shall be mindful of the power of the Lord for ever, for that thou hast not spared thy life by reason of the distress and tribulation of thy people, but hast *prevented our ruin* in the presence of our God.”*

“My body will be the leaven. I must die to ward

* Hodie nomen tuum ita magnificavit ut non recedat laus tua de ore hominum qui memores fuerint virtutis Domini in æternum, pro quibus non pepercisti animæ tuæ propter angustias et tribulationem generis tui, sed *subvenisti ruinæ* ante conspectum Dei nostri.—Epistle of the Mass of Our Lady of Seven Dolours. 3rd Sunday of September.

off ruin," had often been the words of the Man of God before he descended to the tomb.

At the moment of the Elevation the congregation prostrated themselves. The sick woman alone remained motionless, and when the instant of the Sacred Banquet arrived, her husband went and knelt at the Holy Table, while she, impotent and powerless, waited for her God to come to her. And He came, borne by mortal hands, to feed her hunger and assuage her thirst. But hardly had she received the Sacrament of the Lord, than she felt an irresistible strength urging her to rise and kneel. And at the same moment she heard, in the depths of her heart, a sovereign voice commanding her to do so. Her husband was kneeling beside her with his face in his hands, communing with his soul after receiving the Blessed Sacrament, believing without belief and hoping without hope.

Suddenly he heard a movement and the rustling of a dress. He raised his head and looked round. Mme. Guerrier had just knelt down beside him.

Respect for the sacred edifice checked the cry of gratitude, of joy, of amazement that rose to his lips. Instinctively he turned his eyes to the altar, where they met those of the priest, shining like his own with rapture and thanksgiving. At that very instant he had turned towards the people to utter the grand sacerdotal salutation.

"Dominus vobiscum. The Lord be with you!"

The Lord was with them indeed.

The mass was finished and the last gospel was being read. Mme. Guerrier rose from her knees, stood up without effort, and then knelt down again. . . .

As for her husband, his legs shook under him, and it was with difficulty he kept from sinking to the ground. Pale and trembling, his eyes dimmed by tears, he looked at his wife without daring to speak to her, and without being able to believe his senses. The miraculously cured woman prayed and poured forth her thanksgivings in profound absorption. All the emotion fell to her husband's share, she herself was absolutely calm.

The priest took off the sacred ornaments and knelt at the corner of the altar to offer his thanksgivings. How fervent they must have been! He had begun his Noveno at the side of the deathbed of the Servant of Mary, uniting with his prayers the name of him who had just quitted this world, and imploring Our Lady of Lourdes to permit that on *the ninth day* that revered friend should himself give the answer. After that, he had by the exercise of heroic charity transmitted to another the treasure on which he had so eagerly counted.

And then, on *the ninth day*, at the hour fixed, neither sooner nor later, *at the mass that he himself was saying with that intention*, the person indicated by him stood up, suddenly cured, like the paralytics of the gospel, by the contact of an invisible hand. The answer he had implored of the goodness and power of Our Lady of Lourdes was sent him with divine distinctness. The sign he had asked for was given him with unmistakable clearness.

Whatever might be the joy of the newly-recovered paralytic, the priest's joy was greater still. His friend the Curé Peyramale, who had left this world for heaven, began already to manifest his presence there.

V.

They none of them, however, paid any attention to the different details of the little lateral chapel in which they were, and to which a hand, stronger and more delicate than the hand of man, had led them. And yet the stones, the sculptures, the inscriptions were so many mysterious voices murmuring the same name, that name which the priest had thought he heard when reading the last words of the epistle, resounding in his ear like an echo from a higher world.

It was the first chapel on entering, and the commencement of the Basilica: everything in it recalled the origin of the divine history of Our Lady of Lourdes, of whom, to use the words of Mgr. Langénieux, the Curé Peyramale had been *the witness, the confidant, and the Apostle*.

Beneath the window the entire wall is covered by three white marble slabs, high and wide; and on the marble is engraved a brief history of the eighteen Apparitions.

The Curé of Lourdes had been invested with his great rôle here below, when the Virgin sent Bernadette to him with the formal command:—"Go and tell the priests that I wish them to build me a chapel here". And on that marble could be read the celebrated order:—"Go and tell the priests that I wish them to build me a chapel here". . . . Could it be possible to bring more distinctly to mind the mission and the person of the first labourer of the first hour, of him who had hollowed out the first foundation, and laid the first stone?

One day the Curé of Lourdes had asked the Apparition of the Grotto to cause roses to blossom in the frosts of February, and the Virgin had answered him by the word "Penance". Up above the friezes a long line composed of gold hearts runs round the nave, reproducing by the manner in which they are disposed, some of the words of Our Lady of Lourdes; and just exactly above the great arch that forms the entrance to that lateral chapel, is the very word by which Mary had answered the Curé's request, that word so painfully realised in the life of the sainted priest: "Penance!"

The Curé of Lourdes, in obedience to the decree of Mary, had received on his shoulders the weight of a terrible cross. And what was the subject of the Way of the Cross that the artist had sculptured to the right of the altar, over the little ogive leading to the next chapel. It was the Cyrenian. The Man bearing the Cross. At the altar where the Abbé Martignon had just celebrated Mass, the recollections of that same period stood prominently out beneath the transparent veil of Allegory.

There could be contemplated, chosen amongst all the legions of the Blessed, the saint who most reminds one of Bernadette. A shepherdess, like her, an innocent child of the South, possessing the same youth and speaking the same idiom. The most pure and radiant Germaine Cousin. At her side is the shepherdess's crook, and on her head the covering, similar in shape and name that they call *capuchon* in the region about Toulouse, and *capulet* in the Pyrenees. "Of all my lambs," Bernadette used to say, "the smallest is the one I love most." The little lamb is figured at the feet

of Germaine. Behind her stands the dog, symbol of *Vigilance, Fidelity, and Strength*, to defend both sheep and shepherdess; and that triple virtue brings to mind the energetic Pastor who would never allow the breath of persecution to touch the Child of Mary. When the roses were asked for, Bernadette, it will be remembered, came back empty-handed, but here over the altar the Holy Shepherdess now has her apron full of roses, that her pure hands scatter profusely before her. And as roses must have a perfume, here again before the sacrificial stone, a miracle takes place, embalming every soul and shedding a celestial odour on the memory of the Servant of Mary.

Once the Virgin had smiled as if to promise roses after this life in the season of the eternal spring. . . . Our Lady of Lourdes had just fulfilled the promise contained in her smile. Let us stop here an instant and apply to this supernatural event, and this mystic symbolism, the simple logic of reason.

If the Blessed Virgin, in restoring Mme. Guerrier to health, had not intended to specify in a marked manner the manifest meaning that strikes every mind, and to join with this cure the memory of her servant, is it not evident that she would have chosen *another moment* than that Noveno, which was a day marked in advance, *another circumstance* than that last Mass of the Noveno celebrated by *the intimate friend*, *another place* than that significant chapel? She would have chosen the previous day, or the day following, or any other date; the Grotto, the Piscina, or another altar, and have accorded to some other priest the privilege of saying Mass at the hour and place of the miracle. But it seemed to be her

express will that the day, the priest, and the place, should all suggest the same name and give exactly the answer so eagerly solicited. Beneath the action of her all-powerful will, every detail of the event, reflecting and re-echoing every other detail, proclaimed and brought into relief the self-same truth. No! no! such concordance, such comparisons are not the fortuitous results of chance! Those delicate harmonies, those exquisite details, so carefully and perfectly combined by Him who directs all things, as infallibly denote the action of a divine hand, as the machinery of a watch and the motion of the wheels denote the action of the watch-maker. Circumstances like these are the language in which God addresses men—a language, at the same time as clear and as enigmatic as that of the parables He once uttered to the crowds collected on the banks of the Lake of Genesareth, or in the streets of Jerusalem. The simple soul listens, understands and adores. “To you,” said Our Lord to His disciples, “it has been given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God; but to these not. They have eyes and they see not; they have ears and they cannot hear.”

For which reason it is necessary when in the presence of a miraculous event or any direct act of divine power, to have our eyes open and our ears attentive—that is, piously to examine and meditate all the circumstances of it, so as to profit by the teaching after having discovered its real meaning.

Do you remember, reader, that touching passage in Genesis, where we read how Eliezer went into Mesopotamia to the city of Nachor to seek a wife for Isaac, and stopped near a well of water without the town. Then,

raising his heart on high, he pronounced these words:—

“O Lord, the God of my master Abraham, meet me to-day, I beseech Thee, and shew kindness to my master Abraham. Behold, I stand nigh the spring of water, and the daughters of the inhabitants of this city will come out to draw water. Now, therefore, the maid to whom I shall say: Let down thy pitcher that I may drink; and she shall answer, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also; let it be the same whom Thou has provided for Thy servant Isaac, and by this I shall understand that Thou hast shewn kindness to my master.”

He had not yet ended these words within himself, and behold Rebecca came out, the daughter of Bathuel, son of Melcha, wife to Nachor, the brother of Abraham, having a pitcher on her shoulder:

And she went down to the spring and filled her pitcher and was coming back.

And the servant ran to meet her and said: “Give me a little water to drink of thy pitcher”.

And she answered: “Drink, my lord”. And quickly she let down the pitcher upon her arm and gave him to drink. And when he had drunk, she said: “I will draw water for thy camels also, till they all drink”. . . .

But he, musing, beheld her with silence, desirous to know whether the Lord had made his journey prosperous or not. And after that the camels had drunk. . . .

“Whose daughter art thou?”

“I am the daughter of Bathuel, the son of Melcha, whom she bore to Nachor.” . . .

The man bowed himself down and adored the Lord,

saying: "Blessed be the Lord God of my father Abraham, who hath not taken away His mercy and truth from my master, and hath brought me the straight way into the house of my master's brother."

By the perfect concordance between the secret prayer of his soul and the sign he had asked for, which was accomplished to the very letter, Eliezer had recognised the distinct answer of God and the favour extended to his master Abraham. It is the same with us now, for the God of those far-distant times is the God of our own days. His name is Eternal, and now, as in the past, He responds in the same manner to the upright heart that implores His help.

But to resume our narrative.

VI.

Our Lady of Lourdes, invoked under the circumstances just related, had granted a perfect and complete grace. Mme. Guerrier was radically cured.

She had prayed to obtain her cure, she now prayed in thanksgiving for it.

Then she rose, calm, serene, without the least excitement, physical or moral, but radiant with the effects of the divine contact; and turning to her husband, she said:

"My dear, give me your arm. . . . Let us go out!" . . .

M. Guerrier could not believe his eyes. What he saw accomplished before him appeared an impossibility, a heavenly dream; and his unspeakable joy was checked

by the fear of seeing the glorious vision suddenly disappear. . . .

In his bewilderment he turned to call the porters.

"No! no!" said the Abbé Martignon, recalling him to the consciousness of the divine and miraculous reality. "Let her walk!"

Then M. Guerrier tremblingly offered her his arm. She took it, and without saying a word, silently pressed it for an instant to her heart. That silent pressure expressed better than any words could have done the remembrance of their past troubles, and the immensity of their present happiness. The happiness of the wife and mother, of the children, and of all the family—she thought of them all at that moment. And from her own and her husband's heart, those two hearts which formed but one, an immeasurable burst of gratitude rose towards God and the Blessed Virgin.

Mme. Guerrier went down the two steps of the chapel and crossed the end of the nave. The pilgrims from Marseilles were celebrating by their chants the power and goodness of Our Lady of Lourdes without having any suspicion that close to them, in a lateral chapel, and amidst the silence of a low mass, that power had just manifested itself.

On leaving the Basilica, the paralytic woman, newly cured, went down the great stone flight of twenty-five steps with the greatest ease. The carriage was waiting at the foot of it, and the coachman, at sight of her, remained rooted to his seat, motionless with astonishment. At a sign from M. Guerrier he drew up with the carriage and opened the door.

"No," said Mme. Guerrier, "I want to go to the Grotto."

"Yes, certainly," said her husband; "but we will go in the carriage."

"By no means.—I mean to go on foot, leaning on your arm."

The Abbé Martignon leant over, and, with the exhausted voice that was but a whisper, he uttered the word of faith:

"She is cured.—Let her do as she likes."

They let her have her way, therefore, and all three descended to the Grotto, by the Curé Peyramale's little paths. At the Basilica, before the altar she had offered her first thanksgiving, and at the Grotto, before the statue of Mary, she again lifted up her heart in gratitude.

Without any help or support, she knelt down and prostrated herself. Then she rose, drank a glass of the miraculous water, and directed her steps towards the Piscina where the sick were bathed. All cured as she was, she insisted on entering the water, and her whole being drew from it a new strength and a greater activity in the play of the joints.

She desired to return to the town on foot. The carriage went before them at a foot-pace. But when they had got half-way, the Abbé Martignon was obliged to ask a little respite not for her but for himself.

"Madame," said he, "I pray you do not walk so fast. You are cured," he added smiling, "but I am not. And I own that I can go no further. Out of pity for me let us get into the carriage."

"Very willingly," she replied.

And she lightly stepped into the vehicle.

The carriage went through Lourdes, but when it got a little above the old church, it turned suddenly into the street of Langelles. Had the coachman made a mistake? Not at all. He obeyed Mme. Guerrier's orders and took the right road. When he stopped, Mme. Guerrier got out with her husband and the former Curé of Algiers, and going down a rough steep wooden staircase she penetrated into the Crypt of an unfinished church.

There she found a tomb covered with a simple stone. She dipped her fingers in some holy water; and with a branch of laurel that was placed there sprinkled a few drops of the sacred liquid on the tomb.

Then she knelt and prayed above the remains of the Servant of Mary: the Curé Peyramale.

And that was her third act of thanksgiving.

During the week that followed the death of Mgr. Peyramale no pilgrimage had appeared in the mourning town. But on that same glorious day, the first pilgrimage, that had made its entry into Lourdes, carrying at its head the banner of Our Lady of Guard, went and prayed before the tomb. Thus, the first garland brought from a distance to be deposited on the sepulchre, bears the very date of the miracle we have just related: "The pilgrims from Marseilles, 16th September, 1877".*

* To inaugurate their processions by an act of gratitude towards the great Servant of Mary, the pilgrimages that came to Lourdes at that time, such as those of Tours, Rouergue, Piedmont, Villefranche, etc., took the tomb of the Curé of Lourdes in their way in going from the parish church to the Grotto of Lourdes and conforming themselves to the canonic prescriptions they there recited the prayers of the Church. The Bishop of Tarbes, Mgr. Jourdan, fearing a premature veneration of the Curé of Lourdes, interdicted the road taken by the processions.

M. and Mme. Guerrier, accompanied by their friend the Abbé Martignon, at last returned home to M. Lavigne's dwelling, where the sick woman had arrived the day before, a prey, for so many years past, to an incurable paralysis.

Their host and hostess were lost in delight and astonishment. It seemed to them like a blessing on their house. With what emotion they listened to the account of all that had just been accomplished! . . . And how heartily they entered into the marvellous coincidences which were the special features of the miraculous event.

"Madame," said M. Lavigne, after hearing all, "do you know where you are, and to what particular spot Providence has led you, so that, having left this house, a little while ago, entirely paralysed, you should now return to it completely cured?"

"No, I do not!" she replied, with a look of surprise.

"You are in the house which was the Presbytery of Lourdes at the period of the Apparitions; and you are staying in the room where the Curé Peyramale interrogated Bernadette for the first time, and where, from her mouth, he received the commands of the Blessed Virgin."

At this supreme coincidence, at this last great light thrown on the actions of Providence, and the evident intention of these events, a sort of thrill went through the little company. The light was so brilliant that it dazzled them. For a time they all remained silent and thoughtful.

CHAPTER IV.

I.

M. and Mme. Guerrier remained a few days longer at Lourdes. They preferred staying at the place where they had received such a signal favour and thanking God for it there, to hurrying away with it immediately. Then they took the train to return to the house of Mme. Guerrier's parents at Saint-Gobain. The journey was got through rapidly and without fatigue.

We have before our eyes a letter from M. Guerrier containing some interesting details to which we leave their own peculiar charm :—

“Let me try and retrace for you,” he writes, “the overwhelming astonishment of my dear wife's eldest brother, Hector Biver, who was waiting for us at the station at Paris, when he saw his sister get out of the carriage without help, take his arm and walk with him to the cab ; his speechless amazement when we got to his house and she ran up the stairs leading to his apartment ; the bewilderment and tearful joy of his servants who, ten days before, had carried my poor Justine, then so ill, up and down stairs with such care and precaution. The next day on our arrival at Chauny, her youngest brother, Alfred Biver, director of the Manufactory of Saint-Gobain, was waiting for us at the station, anxious, uneasy, and disturbed, for, in spite of the letters and telegrams he could not believe the

miracle possible. What, then, was his surprise when my beloved wife sprang into his arms! He could not recover from it, but gave it vent in incessant exclamations during the whole time of our drive along the fourteen miles that separate Chauny from Saint-Gobain. Although the horses went like the wind, the journey seemed long and we felt as if we should never arrive.

“At last about five in the evening we got in sight of the house, and saw all the family, big and little, sisters, sisters-in-law, nephews and nieces, and above all, our dear children, looking out for us at the door with beating hearts, and expectant eyes, eager to convince themselves of the truth, and drink deeply at the overflowing fountain of our mutual happiness.

“But when they saw their mother, their sister, their aunt, coming out of the carriage alone and walking towards them unaided, that was a picture no human power could retrace: what joy! what delicious tears! what embraces! Justine’s mother was never tired of caressing the daughter that Our Lady of Lourdes had restored to her love and sent back to her, strong, well, and perfectly cured.

“The aged father, kept prisoner in one room by his eighty-three years, was not present. We mounted the few steps that separated us from his apartment, all the members of the family following us and filling up the staircase.

“On the threshold of his study stood the venerable octogenarian, his hands trembling more from joy than age, and his noble countenance bathed in tears. He opened his arms and said:

“‘My daughter!’

"Mme. Guerrier fell on her knees.

"'Father,' said she, 'you blessed me when I started for Lourdes sick and incurable. Bless me now that I am come back miraculously cured, as I told you I should be.'

"He extended his arms over my dear Justine's head; then opened them afresh, and she wept out her joy on her father's breast.

"And, that nothing might be wanting to complete our felicity, it happened that this very day was the feast day of her who returned thus triumphant to her father's house. You can imagine what a magnificent celebration we made of it. But that is not all. The Church reclaimed her share of the rejoicings; and the excellent and zealous Curé of Saint-Gobain, the Abbé Poindron, had asked permission of the Bishop of Soissons to celebrate a solemn Benediction, as an act of thanksgiving for the unspeakable favour we had received.

"The next day, therefore, we repaired to the parish church, where an immense crowd of devout and astonished people thronged our steps. The bells chimed joyously, and the church was filled to overflowing.

"The statue of Our Lady of Lourdes was raised to a place of honour, and opposite that sacred image a seat had been prepared for her whom Mary had deigned to cure. The priest entered the pulpit and related, simply and without commentary, the remarkable event which had occasioned the ceremony. Then several young girls, dressed and veiled in white, placed the statue of Our Lady of Lourdes on their shoulders, and the procession moved on. Behind the image of our Heavenly Bene-

factress, my dear wife walked with me, to the sound of enthusiastic hymns, and the triumphant chords of the organ, followed by a dense crowd of people who could not retain their tears. And finally, the *Te Deum* broke forth beneath the vaulted roof. God had taken His place on the altar." . . .

What need we add to this letter. If earth offers such sights, what must be the rejoicings of heaven! . . .

II.

Here we would fain end our narrative, and leave our readers to steep their souls in these heavenly rays. But, in this world, there is no light without its corresponding shadow, and that we may complete our history, truth compels us to turn our eyes towards a melancholy horizon.

In the same letter, of which such a long extract has been given, M. Guerrier speaks of the Abbé Martignon.

"Never can we forget," he says, "that my dear wife's cure was the answer he had asked the Blessed Virgin to give him by the intervention of the sainted Curé Peyramale. From that moment we have constantly prayed for his own cure, and for the re-establishment of his health. May Our Lady of Lourdes come to our help, and restore to him an hundred-fold that which he abandoned, with such sacred charity, *and not in vain*, to Mme. Guerrier. We all unite our prayers, to ask this favour of our All-powerful Mother; and God knows if, in making our request, we do it with the deepest and most fervent gratitude of our hearts."

In the midst of her joy, Mme. Guerrier experienced sometimes a feeling that troubled her like a remorse.

"Poor Abbé Martignon," she said to us; "it sometimes seems to me that I have stolen his cure from him!"

No, Madame, you have stolen no one's treasure in receiving the gift of God. The Almighty and the Blessed Virgin have disposed all things for Their own glory, perhaps also for the glory of one of their servants, and most certainly for the good of all. You have received a great and touching grace, and it is with tears in our eyes that we have related it. But you may take it for granted that the most signal grace was accorded to the priest of whom you are speaking, when it was given him to raise himself to such sublime heights by an act of devoted unselfishness, when it was given him to have that point of resemblance with the Divine Master who has said in His Gospel, and proved in His own person, that there is no greater charity than to give one's life for one's friends. The good Samaritan succoured the wounded man; the Good Shepherd has given His life for one sheep of the fold. . . . Be grateful then, but do not pity him. He has chosen the better part.

A few weeks later, the Abbé Martignon left Lourdes, where his friend the Servant of the Virgin no longer was. He was too ill to follow the inclinations of his heart, and cross the Mediterranean to rejoin his paternal Archbishop in Africa. Towards the beginning of winter, he went to Hyères, where the mild climate prolonged for him the warm days of Autumn. "May the sea-breezes revive him!" we

prayed to God, "and may the genial rays of the sun restore him!"

III.

What was foreordained to happen, however, took place in a short time. God did not long defer His servant's reward. Winter had passed and the Abbé Martignon, weaker than ever, left Hyères to go to Poitiers on a visit to some friends. In a church close at hand he could still celebrate the divine Mysteries every day.

"I am here," he wrote to us, "like a bird on a branch—waiting for it to break!"

And soon, indeed, it did break, and the soul took its flight towards the eternal heavens.

Eight months and a half after Mme. Guerrier's cure, the 27th of May, 1878, between three and four in the evening, the Abbé Martignon was taken with a strange shivering. He soon understood the meaning of that supreme warning.

"*Magister adest et vocat te*, . . . Mary," said Martha to her sister, "the Master is come and is asking for thee."

As the last rays of the sun disappeared behind the horizon, the Priest of the Lord drooped his head, and his eyes closed for ever on earth, to open again in that radiant country where the Light ever shineth.

Thus lived and thus died Mgr. Peyramale's second friend. Like the Abbé Lafont, on the day after the obsequies of the Servant of Mary, the Abbé Martignon had entered into eternal life by the door of devoted charity, and self-sacrifice.* The inscription engraved

* For proofs, see Appendix, Note V.

on the master's tomb is equally applicable to the two disciples: "*Zelus comedit eos*". Love had eaten them up. May they all three repose in Peace! And if God has received them into His Glory, as we firmly hope, may they remember, in Heaven, the friends who loved them here on earth.

THE WITNESSES OF MY CURE.

A FEW WORDS OF INTRODUCTION.

It is now twenty years ago since I was the object of an extraordinary cure of which I gave a brief account in my book entitled "Our Lady of Lourdes".

For the supernatural work of my cure it pleased God to employ three instruments, three men who at that period were in obscurity but now are publicly known.

The first was a young Pole whose acquaintance I had made in Italy. The second, a protestant who had been the friend of my boyhood. The third, a saintly old man whose life was passed in adoring the Saviour's face.

It is only of late years and by the light of events I could not then foresee, that I have understood the providential influence which the presence and action of the young Pole in question had had in the economy of that miraculous event. Hence results, in the narrative formerly written by me, a first and considerable lacune that I now think it opportune to fill up, so that the hand of God may be manifested with still greater clear-

ness and still more irrefutable distinctness, directing and controlling the events of our lives.

I had related, with the consent of my protestant friend, the prominent part he had taken in the event, but his name at that period being without any public interest, I had not thought it necessary to publish it, and in my narration had simply spoken of him as "M. de —".

It has happened, however, that this name, so carefully kept secret by me, has since been divulged by the French and foreign press, so that it has become public property, and that with the addition of many an apocryphal detail which cannot be allowed to gain credit. This places me, at present, under the absolute necessity of intervening in the name of Truth, and substituting for the errors of legend the pure and simple reality of History.

Fearing, doubtless, that some ray of human glory might reflect on him and afflict his humility, the saintly old man whom Providence had also associated with the history of my cure, refused, notwithstanding my pressing solicitations, to allow me to speak of that part of it in which he had been more directly concerned. The publication, without my consent, of different fragments of manuscript that I had left with him and which were found among his papers after his death, releases me henceforth from my obligation. I can therefore complete my narrative and repair the forced and involuntary omission I had foreshadowed to the reader in all the editions of *Our Lady of Louviers*, by a double line of dots at the last paragraph of the chapter relating to my cure.

Although the substance of my first relation is in no

way modified by these important additions, still they give to the whole, and to the different episodes of the narrative, an entirely new character, the special nature of which, we think, will not fail to strike anyone who has ever meditated on angelic interference, and divine intervention in the things of this lower world.

LES BRETOUX, *25th March, 1883.*

THE WITNESSES OF MY CURE.

CHAPTER I.

FRIENDS AND ANGELS.

I.

On the 31st of October, 1861, the eve of All Souls' Day, as the bells of the numerous churches and basilicas of Rome rang out to announce the Feast of the following day, I entered the Eternal City for the first time in my life. I was then thirty-three years of age.

I shall say nothing of my religious emotion at finding myself in the midst of the glorious monuments that greet the eye on every side in the capital of the Christian world; of the long audience that the Pope, Pius the Ninth, deigned to grant me, nor of my interviews with the Cardinal Antonelli, all those events being foreign to the circumstances I am about to relate.

A few days after my arrival I had the honour of being introduced to the Princess Sophia Odeschalchi. That great Roman lady was of Lithuanian origin, and belonged to the illustrious family of the Branickis of Bialystok.

The Princess Sophia had a nephew staying with her, a young Polish Count about twenty-six years of age, for whom the doctors had recommended the climate of Rome. I have seldom heard a more fascinating talker than Wladimir. His conversation was witty, sparkling, and often profound, and it acquired an additional charm from the high-bred turn of his head, and the play of his features, which were the most expressive I ever saw. His clear, soft eyes were penetrating as the point of a sword, his forehead broad, intellectual, and thoughtful. His mind, in the form of subtle remarks, keen observations, or powerful theses, had so often passed through his delicate and sensitive lips, that they had, as it were, retained the permanent impression of it, and were expressive even when silent. The irradiations of life were all the more closely concentrated in the delicate lines of his aristocratic face, that the rest of his body was afflicted with untimely infirmities. The Count Wladimir had been weak and sickly from his childhood, and could only stand upright and move about in a sort of artificial or mechanical way. His bones, imperfectly attached, would have been out of joint at every step but for the support of a surgical apparatus of steel springs fitted to the knees, by means of which, and the help of a cane, he succeeded in walking pretty easily, though with rather a jerking gait. He used, nevertheless, to take a walk every day along the Corso, or on the shady heights of Mount Pincio.

His painful condition was often complicated by pains in his limbs and violent headaches, but he supported all with admirable fortitude and cheerful resignation. He had sought and found in the vivifying practices of

Christian piety the source and principle of enduring patience.

This young Pole, who had grown up beneath the sun of Italy, united in his person all the captivating grace of the Slavonic race, and the vivacity of the children of the South. His powerful and supple intellect was apt in understanding and assimilating; and he was alike familiar with history, philosophy, politics, and theology.

But his most irresistible attraction was the charm of his conversation. On that field of battle he excelled in the conquest of men; he knew its strategy by heart, its marches and the counter-marches, its evolutions and circumvolutions, its calm demonstrations, its sudden surprises, nay, even its very ambushes.

Possessing the enviable art of talking to a supreme degree, he was also an adept in the more difficult art of listening. He knew how to enter into the feelings of others, and bring them into harmony with his own; he won his interlocutor by the way in which he lent him his attention and interested himself in what he was saying. Often when he wished to convince, he appeared to yield, he combatted by flight and vanquished by escaping. Everything served him for an arm; decisive reasonings, clever jokes, subtle retorts, or well-turned compliments. When he could not immediately overcome an adversary, he undertook to gain him, or rather he tried both ways, and always succeeded, at least with the second, for though one might leave him without being convinced or vanquished, none could see or hear him without being captivated.

He expressed himself with equal facility in the Polish language, in Russian, Italian, English, and

French; and indulged in a sort of cosmopolitan coquetry, that consisted in addressing his different friends in their national idiom. He spoke French, especially, with exquisite perfection, shading off his words, and turning his sentences with as much art and delicacy as Chamfort or Rivarol. He did not write it nearly so well. His pen, powerless to follow the rapid impromptu of his mind, stumbled, hesitated, and groped heavily along in vain efforts to keep pace with his thoughts. He was a conversationalist rather than a writer.

We have already said that Count Wladimir was profoundly religious. He communicated every day, and, if my memory does not deceive me, he acquitted himself of the strict obligations of a third order, either that of Saint Francis, or Saint Dominic. Indeed, it was not necessary to frequent his society for very long to discover that in his heart dwelt the Peace of the true believer; no earthly instinct seemed ever to have dimmed its purity, it appeared inaccessible to any but intellectual or spiritual sentiments. None had examined more deeply than he into the treaties, the revolutions, the wars, and the international events which constitute the history of modern Europe, and he dissertated on them all with a superiority of judgment and a depth of thought, that recalled involuntarily to one's mind the Talleyrands and Metternichs and other great diplomatists of the beginning of the century.

His exceptional piety, and his regular reading of certain Offices, his wonderful intelligence, his extensive knowledge, his intimate acquaintance with all the moves of the political chess-board, his sparkling conversation,

the native distinction of his manners and sentiments, all combined to form a most remarkable personage, a diamond cut in several facets. He at one and the same time, in him had something of the Priest, the Statesman, and the Nobleman.

The portrait I have traced will explain my sudden friendship for him. To explain why he loved me in return would not be so easy ; indeed, I shall not undertake to do so. Count Wladimir being a man of the world, and living in the world, was too prominently in view not to give rise to very opposite judgments and appreciations ; and if he had his enthusiasts he was also not without his contradictors. Not being able to deny the bright side of his highly-gifted nature, some few disenchanted people, sceptics (we will add envious persons too, that no one may be forgotten), kept obstinately whispering in my ear :

“Are you sure that, like everything human, your gold medal has no reverse ? Does this gracefully attractive Pole possess as much firmness as grace, as much solidity as brilliance ? He is an admirable theorist, would he be as strong in practice ?”

“Has not the fascinating charm he exercises on all who approach him deluded him with the idea that if he gain an enemy to his person, he is more than half gained to his cause ? And does not the pursuit of such a result incline him sometimes to that extreme courtesy, and those too amiable advances which constitute what might be called the diplomacy of condescension, and the art of political politeness ?”

“And does not that marvellous delicacy of analysis which, like a magnifying-glass, increases a hundred-fold

the strength of his intellectual powers, contribute also to deceive himself precisely by the exaggerated relief it gives to the details he examines? Just as the microscope shows us the finest skin as rough as a file, or a hair enlarged to the size of a cable, may not Wladimir's perspicacity, in a similar way, occasionally expose him to error in the view he takes of persons or things, whether he consider their qualities or their defects? May it not lead him sometimes into excess of infatuation, sometimes into sudden defiance and abrupt change of opinion? He who is so supple with his adversaries the more easily to ensnare them, would he accept a frank and sincere contradiction, without immediately taking offence as at an act of hostility? Is the constancy of his friendship in proportion to its vivacity and warmth? And is one sure with him of a lasting affection? Or rather, as with his ancestors, the Scythians, may not what appears a solid house, a secure habitation, turn out to be simply a tent pitched in some halting-place, stationary sometimes for years together on the same spot, but always ready to disappear from one minute to another, at the least noise from afar that may strike on the Slav's ever anxious ear?"

I heard these rumours and depreciations without listening to them. Perhaps those who uttered them employed the magnifying-glass they spoke of to metamorphose minute things into enormities, and imperceptible blades of grass into forest trees!

But there is no love without faith. I listened only to the voice of deep attachment and the inclination of my heart, and I can render myself this justice that I believed in Wladimir without limit, and loved him

without restriction. Our intimacy of the heart and mind soon became closer and closer.

We generally met three times a-day. In the morning I went to see him, and have a few moments' chat, at mid-day we met for the second time in a restaurant of the Place d'Espagne, where we lunched together; and after, if it was fine, we took a stroll, chatting the while on a thousand topics, beneath the warm winter sun that bathes Rome in its rays. In the evening I saw him again in the drawing-room of the Princess, his aunt.

He was particular to accommodate the form of his language to the feelings that animated him, and the familiarity of our appellations clearly manifested the progress of our friendship. At the beginning of our acquaintance I naturally greeted by the name of "*Monsieur le Comte*" him whom everyone at the Palazzo Odeschalchi, his relatives excepted, called "*Il signor Comte*". But soon he objected to that, and I had to substitute "*Mon cher Comte*" for the more ceremonious form. Before long that displeased him also; and taking the opportunity offered by a note I had written him, he replied that he would receive no more letters from me unless they commenced "*Mon cher ami*"; a condition too much in keeping with my own feelings for me to make any objection. But the expression "*Mon cher ami*" had soon to be replaced by the still more familiar one of "*Wladimir*". Finally as the Princess Odeschalchi and the members of his family often called him by the pet name of his childhood, "*Wladimiro*" or "*Miro*," I also was required to make use of the diminutive, which I did all the more willingly as in the archaic Latin of Plautus *Miro* means *I admire*, and indeed I

admired the pure soul, the delicate and charming mind, and the radiant intellect as much as I loved their possessor. If I thus allow my pen to linger over these memories it is because they are sweet to me and make my old heart glow when I recall them, even after an interval of twenty years ; and, in short, because it was necessary distinctly to point out from the beginning, in the interest of what is to follow, how Providence had brought me, at that time, into connection with the young Count Wladimir, and how I had loved him sincerely and tenderly in those bygone days of our youth.

I left Rome in the beginning of 1862, with the intention of returning there the following autumn, and Wladimir and myself looked forward with pleasure to that time.

But very soon after my return to Paris I was threatened with a calamity that appeared likely to upset all our plans. My eyes became alarmingly weak.

II.

I had always enjoyed excellent sight. I could distinguish objects at an immense distance ; and could read any manuscript or print with the greatest facility, however close it might be. Whole nights of study had never caused me the least fatigue ; I was even amazed and delighted myself at the clearness and strength of my sight, which was at the same time so powerful and keen. I was therefore greatly surprised and cruelly disenchanted, when in the course of June and July of 1862 I felt it getting gradually weaker, drooping heavily at night work, and at last becoming so useless that I

was obliged to give up reading and writing. If I opened a book, I had no sooner read one or two lines, than excessive fatigue and pain in the upper part of my eyes forced me to lay it down. I consulted several doctors; amongst others two celebrated oculists, M. Desmares and M. Giraud-Teulon. Both declared that I was suffering from hyperæmia of the optic nerve.

The prescriptions I followed did me no good whatever. After a ferruginous regimen and a long period of rest, I was at last enabled one day to read and write for an hour or two in the afternoon, but on the following day I had fallen back into my previous state. Then I employed local remedies, cold douches on the eye-ball, cupping on the nape of the neck, a general hydropathic treatment and application of alcoholic lotions on the parts near the eye. All was useless. If, from time to time I obtained a little relief, it only lasted a few minutes; in short the disease began to assume the chronic character peculiar to incurable infirmities.

I could use my eyes for nothing. I was ordered to avoid too great a light and the sight of too many colours. I never went out without taking the precaution of putting on blue spectacles with dark shields at the sides, and in short, in obedience to the doctor's advice I left Paris for the country, and went to stay with my mother at Coux on the banks of the Dordogne. A young lad whom I had taken for my secretary read books and newspapers to me and wrote at my dictation.

III.

It was now September, and I had been for three months in a state that was every day becoming more

alarming. I was a prey to extreme despondency and lowness of spirits, which, however, I carefully concealed. My parents and friends on their side were full of serious apprehensions that they would not let me suspect; we were all persuaded that my sight was lost, but we each tried to instil into the other a hope that we none of us entertained, and kept our secret fears in our own bosoms.

With the exception of a few rare instants of illusion such as one has sometimes, even in the most desperate cases, I no longer counted either on scientific help or on natural reaction. The crushing conviction that I was beyond cure gradually took possession of my mind, and though I prayed, I asked nothing more of God than grace to be resigned to the trial He had sent me; the bare idea of imploring a special intervention in my favour never even occurred to me. I was, besides, inclined to think, with Blaise Pascal, that the time of those exceptional manifestations of divine power called miracles, was passed and gone; and I often repeated to myself the melancholy lines of a blind poet of our parts:—

*“ Comme la prophétie et comme les oracles,
Hélas ! il est passé l'heureux temps des miracles.
Christ ne dit plus aux morts : ‘ Levez-vous et marchez,’
Par Lui les yeux éteints ne seront plus touchés.”**

But around me and above me, a hidden Benefactor, like the angel Raphael who protected Tobias, had taken pity on my anguish.

* Lafon-Labatut. *Insomnies et Regrets.*

IV.

Have you ever thought, dear reader, on the part taken by our Guardian Angels in the different actions of our lives. With what indefatigable perseverance that mysterious companion follows us from the cradle to the tomb; from our first cry to our last breath. He has neither the right nor the power to violate our liberty, which is one of the indispensable conditions of our merits, but he concentrates all his efforts on directing our feelings in the right way, illuminating our thoughts, dissuading us from evil paths, showing us the right road, from which we were diverging, and bringing about circumstances that induce us to walk in it.

Sometimes our radiant Protector does all this alone, of himself, rousing in us a sudden intuition, inspiring us with some happy idea, inciting us to write such and such a letter, to make such and such a remark, to take such and such measures, things, in short, which may of themselves appear insignificant, but of which he knows the future bearing, and how they will be the first link in the chain of events and secondary causes that are to extricate us from our difficulties. At other times, this invisible brother of our souls calls on other Guardian Angels to come to his help, and together they concert the plan of a campaign divinely elaborated, having for its object the benevolent victory they hope to gain. Then it is that the fortunate inspiration occurs to us by the advice of a friend, by the reading of a borrowed book, by an unexpected meeting, or by the necessity of a journey which brings us, contrary to all

provisions, at a certain place, at a certain hour, in contact with a certain person, whose influence must infallibly affect our own wills.

And thus are these pure spirits ceaselessly working in the world to check the advance of Evil, enlarge the limits of Good, suggest fruitful resolutions, solicit our wills, and, when our wills resist, prepare favourable conjunctures, decisive incidents which, by a series of varied impulsions and indirect means, lead the mortal committed to their care towards the general or special event that God has foreordained.

One of the most usual characteristics of the influence of our Good Angels, is that it is carefully hidden under natural appearances; the ordinary course of life, the fortuitous chances of business, or the eventualities of social intercourse. All that those divine messengers accomplish seems to be done of itself, so delicately do they touch the springs that determine us. While they are in reality everywhere, and mixed up with everything, one is conscious of them nowhere and in nothing. Their essence, superior to ours, is invisible, their powerful arm is impalpable; their immense benefits are anonymous. Mingling with our humanity, these forces of the Almighty govern, direct, and dispose all things in silence and incognito.

Afterwards, however, when their work is finished, it happens sometimes that the harmonious unfolding of successive events, the surprising concordance of every incident towards the same end, the minute juxtaposition of circumstances, the extraordinary choice of certain individualities as instruments and means, the rigorous precision of certain pre-ordained dates, in short, a thou-

sand striking peculiarities reveal their secret intervention as surely as the regular and simultaneous movements of an army denote the presence of the officers and the general; or as the aspect of a building betrays the hand of the workman and renders evident the plan of the architect. The recalling of these truths, perhaps too little known or too often forgotten, is not a vain digression. It is a torch lighted and placed in the hands of the reader, that its rays may guide him on the road we are about to pursue.

V.

It is now time to speak of another friend, besides Wladimir. This friend is a compatriot, and our close intimacy dates from childhood. It was formed at college and continued through our youth. If my warm affection for Wladimir was at the enthusiastic period of all beginnings and all dawns, my friendship for Charles de Freycinet (for that was his name) had attained to the glowing hour of mid-day. He ignored none of my thoughts and feelings, and the secrets of his heart were not concealed from me. Our minds and dispositions, which in their nature were widely opposite, harmonised marvellously together, and fructified each other by their contact. More than once his heart has burned at my words; often my mind has been enlightened by his conversation. How many evenings have we passed together on opposite sides of the hearth, discussing in their turn the different and redoubtable problems that for six thousand years have preoccupied the children of Adam, until time has been forgotten, and approaching day causing

our lamp to pale, has surprised the two friends in earnest conversation on the mysteries of the present existence and those of the life to come!

My natural inclinations disposed me to retreat and solitude, his tendencies and aptitudes drew him amongst men and their more engrossing interests; yet Charles could not imagine that we should ever be separated, either in our destinies or our roads through life; and in his dreams of the future, my place was always at his side.

Divergence of opinion, change of country, distant journeys, long absences, marriage, in short all the crises to which ordinary friendships so often succumb, had never affected ours. He was a Protestant, I a Catholic. He had known me at college when I had lost my faith, and he had seen me become a believer again from my twentieth year. I was then single, and he married; his wife like himself, was a Protestant, and they lived at Bordeaux, where he was director of the works of the Southern Railway. I lived sometimes in Paris, and sometimes in Périgord. He was an eminent engineer and a distinguished mathematician, and he published volumes bristling with figures on the inclines and curves of the railroad, or on the metaphysics of mathematical calculations, whereas I was irresistibly drawn towards religious and literary studies. . . . But neither time, distance, diversity of opinion, nor opposition, had weakened our intimacy, and far or near, we were still the same old friends.

So I wrote him from Coux, by the medium of my little secretary, a few melancholy lines, in which I confided my trouble to him, and expressed my fears of

becoming quite blind. He happened at that moment to be at his father's at Négrepelisse in Tarn-et-Garonne.

His answer was prompt. It reached me the 15th of September, and surprised me extremely. This is what it contained :—

“MY DEAR FRIEND,—Your few lines gave me great pleasure ; but as I have already told you, *I long to see your own writing*. A few days ago, I passed through Lourdes (near Tarbes) on my way from Caunterets, and there I visited the celebrated Grotto ; I also heard such marvellous things about cures obtained by the water there, principally cures of diseases of the eyes, that I advise you *very seriously* to try it. Were I a Catholic and a believer like you, and suffering as you are, I should not hesitate to try the chance. If it is true that the sick have been suddenly cured there, you might hope to be one of the favoured number ; and if it is not true, what do you risk in making the trial ? I may add that I have a little personal interest in the experiment. If it should succeed, what an important fact it would be for me to record. I should be the witness of a miraculous event, or at least of an event in which the person chiefly interested would be above suspicion. . . . Good-bye, dear friend let me know how you are, and try to arrange that we may soon meet.

“Your old friend,

“C. DE FREYCINET.

“NÉGREPELISSE, 12th September, 1862.”

“It appears,” he added, in a postscript, “that it is not necessary to go to Lourdes to take this water, you can have it sent to you. All you have to do is to write to the Curé of Lourdes. You must, of course, previously accomplish certain devotions ; those naturally, I cannot indicate to you, but the Curé of Lourdes will tell you. Ask him, at the same time, to send you a little pamphlet, written by the Vicar-General of Tarbes, and relating such of the miraculous facts as have been authentically proved.”

Such a letter from my friend was certainly calculated

to astonish me. Charles de Freycinet was a man of a clear, positive, mathematical and naturally elevated mind, but, at the same time, very little inclined to fanatical illusions ; with that he was a protestant. . . . Such advice as he had given me, therefore, coming from him, filled me with amazement. I resolved, however, not to follow it.

"I almost fancy," I answered him (still through the medium of my little secretary) "that I am a little better to-day. If the amelioration continues I shall not, this time, have recourse to the extraordinary remedy you suggest, and for which, besides, I should not have the faith necessary."

I must now confess, not without confusion, the secret motives of my resistance.

VI.

De Freycinet's letter had had more effect on me than I was willing to acknowledge. His appeal to the logical consequences of my Catholic belief had roused my mind to a series of reflections and arguments which shook my scepticism and, by degrees, dispelled my faith in Pascal's ideas on the subject of contemporary miracles.

"Why indeed," I asked myself, "should God's arm refuse to accomplish in our days the wonders that it wrought of old ? Is the Almighty's power weakened or His heart less compassionate for the sufferings of humanity ? According to Pascal the heathen nations required this proof. . . . Is it, then, less necessary at the present time, when immense multitudes are daily rushing headlong into the abyss of impiety ?"

Thus my thoughts were profoundly modified under the influence of considerations that an inward voice was constantly whispering to me; and whatever I might plead as a pretext, my faith did not fail me, or rather failed me no longer. Without very well knowing what was meant by the Grotto and the Spring of Lourdes otherwise than by the hostile notices of some anti-christian newspapers, I felt convinced that God could manifest His power by miracles there as well as in many other places. Nay, more: after having frequently commented in my own mind on my friend's surprising letter, I began to feel a sort of mysterious presentiment that if I had recourse to that water (said to have sprung up at the commands of an Apparition of the Blessed Virgin) I should be cured. But I own that what I dreaded was the responsibility of such an exceptional grace. "If ordinary medicine succeeds in curing me," I thought, "I shall be quits when the doctor is paid, that is, I shall find myself in the same position as everyone else. But if God delivers me by a miracle, by a direct and personal intervention, that will be quite another affair. I shall be obliged to amend my life seriously and become a saint. Oh, that is impossible!"

And my miserable heart dreading its own weakness, refused the grace of God.

Such was my reason for obstinately resisting the counsel that Providence, in its inscrutable designs, had sent me by a protestant, a heretic without the pale of the Church: to address myself directly to Heaven and implore the favour of a miracle. But my restlessness and resistance were in vain. In my own heart I felt a secret certainty that the science of man was powerless

to cure me, that the Master I had so often offended would Himself restore my sight, and that in thus making me the gift of a new life, He would put me to the proof to see if I should employ it better.

In the meantime my state remained the same if it did not get worse.

I was just now speaking of good Angels and their celestial diplomacy in exciting and preparing occurrences and meetings intended to overcome rebellious wills and dogged obstinacy. De Freycinet's letter not having decided me, they had now to lead me in some other way to the distant spot and the exact hour in which the divine trap was to be set.

Let us watch their movements. Were they desirous, this time, that their work should one day be revealed, and was it for that reason that they, so to speak, set their seal to it?

Perhaps. . . .

VII.

The most expansive and communicative friendships and intimacies when together, are often the least inclined to correspondence when apart. From the very beginning of my malady, I had deferred having Wladimir written to, because I felt a certain repugnance in corresponding with him through a third person. It was Wladimir, therefore, who, the first, affectionately reproached me for my long silence, which he found inexplicable. His letter, received a week after Freycinet's, was dated from a German watering-place whither he had gone to follow a treatment. Unaware that I was ill and in Périgord, he expressed his joy at the prospect

of seeing me when passing through Paris on his way back to Italy. He fixed no date for his return, but I presumed it would take place about the beginning of November. I have already related to what a degree this young Slav had attracted me, and how much I was attached to him. So that, although Coux is about a hundred and forty leagues distant from Paris, and a great part of that distance had to be done by coach, I resolved to undertake the journey that I might have the happiness of pressing his hand and cordially embracing him on his passage through France.

My answer caused him both joy and pain,—joy, for the hope of meeting again delighted his heart,—pain, for though I touched but lightly on my condition and said nothing of its gravity for fear of making him anxious, the fact of my letter being written by the hand of another filled him with alarm.

“My dear friend,” he wrote uneasily, “*what is the matter with your eyes? It must be something serious since it prevents your writing. Is it the same for reading?*”

“You cannot imagine *how delighted I am at the thought of seeing you again!* And soon now: for I shall be in Paris towards the 25th of September, and shall remain about ten days, but cannot answer for longer.

“I have not been well myself for the last fortnight. I suffer from violent headache which makes me good for nothing. I recommend myself and all that is dear to me in this world to your prayers; those I reserve for you are not my least fervent ones. May God keep us!
——W.”

In consequence of the slowness of the post at that

time, this letter, which left Baden-Baden the 20th of September, did not reach me till the 24th or 25th, that is, not till the time when Wladimir was doubtless already in Paris. It rather upset my plans; for having calculated that he would pass all the month of October at his watering-place, I thought I had five or six weeks before me! whereas, if I wanted to see him, I must now start at once, to the great prejudice of certain important family affairs which detained me in Périgord. . . . Under different circumstances I should not have hesitated to remain there, but my friendship for Wladimir was stronger than all other considerations, and I informed him that I would surmount every personal obstacle, asking him for a delay of three or four days only, to arrange all that was most urgent.

CHAPTER II.

THE TWO LETTERS OF THE 2ND OF OCTOBER.

I.

I arrived at Paris by the mail train, at about half-past four in the morning. The date was the *2nd October*, 1862, and the Feast of the Holy Guardian Angels: a circumstance to which I paid no attention whatever. Indeed, I did not give those invisible spirits a single thought.

But although I forgot them, they remembered me. On that day in which the Church especially honours and invokes them, they directed my every step and the steps of those whom God had chosen to employ in His work of mercy.

And if I retrace these different peculiarities with such minute and apparently useless precision, if I have shown that my friendship for the young Polish Count and our mutual desire to meet again was *the sole cause of my journey*; if I have quoted his letters; and if I still continue my infinitesimal analysis some little time longer, it is because these details were the hidden and imperceptible threads that, moved by the hands of the Divine Messengers, brought me infallibly to the point determined by them.

My long coach journey, followed by a fatiguing night in the train, had thoroughly tired me out. I went to bed immediately on reaching my apartment in the rue

de Seine, and did not wake till twelve o'clock the following day. Then only did I notice on the mantle-piece a note from Wladimir, which had been waiting for me two or three days. It ran as follows:—

“MY DEAR FRIEND,—I received your letter on Saturday, too late to write to you at Coux. I hasten therefore to send you a word of gratitude to your lodgings. Thank you a thousand times for coming so soon. . . . I will not write more now, but shall expect you at 9 o'clock the morning of your arrival. I embrace you and pray for you.
“W.

“Hotel Rastadt, rue Neuve St. Augustin.”

I dressed hastily, breakfasted in five minutes; and springing into a cab, hurried the coachman to the rue Neuve Saint Augustin, hoping Wladimir would still be there and that I should find him after his luncheon.

I was disappointed. Not having had any news of me, and not seeing me come in, after having vainly waited for me all the morning, he concluded that I was still in Périgord, or on the road; and had gone out about one o'clock. They did not think he would come back to the hotel before night. He usually, they said, stayed out all day, dining and spending the evening with his friends. That did not surprise me. The young Count knew all the Polish colony in Paris; and I had no doubt he was, in all probability, wearing himself out in visits amongst his numerous acquaintances. I left my card, therefore, with a few words written on it, and turned my steps towards the Boulevards. It was then about half-past one.

I had hardly left the Hotel Rastadt when Wladimir returned, contrary to his custom, after a short walk. He thought I might have arrived in Paris without having had the time to inform him, and he had come back in

Paris le 2

Cher Ami -

Quel ga guon - Paris me
rend fân - Je ne sars y
lupis - Je vous embrasse

Ce qui est la seule preuve
contraire au mariage
de tous communs -

Je vous attends une heure
de Demain - Demain -

Si Vous ne le pouvez
pas alors après demain

9h. Sur un abri à côté de la

Deux nobiscum.

44. N^o 1. Aug. Raito



Mr. Henri Lafierre
à Paris
(rue de la Harpe)
(93.)



the vague hope of meeting me. Vexed at having missed me, he lost not a second in writing me the following hasty lines, scribbled so hurriedly that a few letters stuck fast, here and there, in the pen. That little note, apparently so insignificant, was destined to become in after years an historical document. In that character we reproduce it here by photogravure; first giving the printed text to help the reader to decipher it.

"DEAR FRIEND,—How unlucky! Paris drives me distracted, and I hardly know what I am doing. I embrace you, which is the only proof I can offer that I am still in my senses. I expect you at half-past one to-morrow. If you cannot come, let us say the day after to-morrow at nine in the morning. That will suit you, I hope.

"*Deus nobiscum.*

"44 rue Neuve Saint Augustin, Rastadt."

"CHER AMI,—Quel guignon! Paris me rend fou, je ne sais y suffire. Je vous embrasse, ce qui est la seule preuve contraire au manque de sens commun.

"Je vous attends à une heure et demie, demain. Si vous ne le pouviez pas, alors après-demain neuf heures du matin, n'est ce pas?

"*Deus nobiscum.*

"44 rue Neuve Saint Augustin, Rastadt."

This hasty autograph, in which even the signature was forgotten, was simply dated thus: *Paris, the 2nd*, and bore neither the indication of the month nor the year.

But as, in the designs of Providence, that indication was necessary and important, it happened that, in his room at the hotel, Wladimir could not find a single envelope. He was therefore obliged to fold his letter in the old-fashioned way, so that, at the post office (as can be seen in the facsimile on the opposite page), the irrefutable stamp was officially set on the very paper of the letter, witnessing to the place, the year, the day, and the hour. *Paris, 5^e levée, 2 Octobre, 62.* The fifth

distribution of the Paris Post includes the letters posted between the hours of half-past one and half-past three. It was, then, the 2nd October, 1862, and the Feast of the Holy Guardian Angels. Over the whole surface of the Christian world, the Catholic Church, in her admirable Liturgy, had renewed, during the Holy Sacrifice, the promise of the sacred books:—

“Thus saith the Lord: Behold I will send my Angel, who shall go before thee and keep thee in thy journey, *and bring thee into the place that I have prepared.*” *

At that very moment those prophetic words were being accomplished for me without my knowledge.

II.

While Wladimir was writing the letter just quoted and reproduced, I sauntered with melancholy step along the Boulevards, in the direction of the Madeleine. Seeing that I had a long afternoon before me, it occurred to me that I might go and enquire if my friend Freycinet happened to be in Paris. I therefore followed the quays towards the quarter of the Gros-Caillou, where his sister lived.

Freycinet had just arrived the previous evening, or that very morning, and was in the drawing-room when I entered. His first words were to enquire after my eyes.

“Alas! my eyes are still in the same state, and I begin to fear that they are lost for ever.”

* *Hæc dicit Dominus Deus: Ecce ego mittam Angelum meum, qui præcedet te et custodiat in via et introducat in locum quem paravi.* Roman Missal. 2nd October. Feast of the Guardian Angels. Epistle of the Mass.

"But why do you not give my remedy a trial?" asked my friend. "Something tells me you will be cured."

"Bah!" replied I. "I must own that, without exactly denying the fact, and without being hostile to it, I have no great faith in all these miraculous waters and pretended Apparitions. They are possible, and I have no objection to make to them; but, not having examined the question, I can neither affirm nor dispute it: it is beyond me. And, in short, I do not wish to have recourse to the means you propose."

"Your objections are worth nothing," he said. "According to your religious principles you ought to believe, and in point of fact you do believe, in the possibility of such things. Why should you not try the experiment? What difference can it make to you? In any case it can do you no harm for the water is natural, chemically composed like ordinary water. Does it not strike you as singular that recourse to the Blessed Virgin should be thus persistently urged on you by a Protestant? I declare to you beforehand: should you be cured, it will be a terrible argument against me."

De Freycinet's sister, who is a fervent Catholic, added her persuasions to his. I was driven to my last entrenchments.

"Well," I said, "I will now honestly reveal the whole truth to you, and take you into my most secret confidence. I am not wanting in faith; but I am a prey to all sorts of contradictions and weaknesses, which are, alas! part and parcel of the most vital and sensitive fibres of my frail nature. For example, a miracle of which I might be the object, would oblige me to sacrifice everything and become a saint. It would be

a terrible responsibility, and I am so cowardly that the thought of it makes me tremble. With a doctor, I should be quit for a little money; but if God cures me, what may He not exact of me in return? I know that all this is contemptible, but such is the wretched pusillanimity of my heart. You thought my faith wavered; that I feared not to see the miracle take place. Do not deceive yourselves, my only fear is that it should succeed."

My friend strove to convince me that, on one hand, I exaggerated the responsibility of which I spoke, and, on the other, made too light of it.

"Virtue is not less compulsory for you now," he said, "than it would be after the miracle. Besides, even if a doctor cured you, it would be equally by the grace of God, and thus your scruples would have the same reason for struggling against your weaknesses or your passions."

All that did not seem to me very clear, and Freycinet probably well knew that his reasoning was specious; but he wished to calm my apprehensions to the best of his power, and get me to follow his advice, reserving to himself the faculty of reminding me later on of the grave responsibility concerning which he now exerted himself to reassure me. Vainly I tried to struggle against the pressure brought to bear upon me. Weary of resistance, I at last gave way.

"As soon as I can get a secretary," I said to de Freycinet, "I will write to Lourdes. I only arrived to-day, and I have not had the time to look for one."

"I will be your secretary!" cried he.

"Very well. So be it. To-morrow we will breakfast

together at the Café Foy, and I will dictate a letter to you after déjeuner."

"Why not at once?" replied he, "we shall gain a day."

Pen, ink, and paper were lying on a table hard by. Freycinet took up the pen.

"Well," said he, "I am waiting for you. But first, what is the day of the month?"

"The 2nd October," I replied.

The 2nd. October, 1862. Feast of the Holy Guardian Angels! It was part of the economy of the divine plan, that the letter we were about to send to the Curé of Lourdes should bear *exactly* the same date as Wladimir's letter already given. . . . Why? . . .

I began to dictate and Freycinet to write.

"PARIS, 2nd October, 1862.

"MONSIEUR LE CURÉ,—I have heard that the water of Lourdes works miracles, and it will not much surprise you if I now ask it to add one more to the list. For the last two or three months my sight has been growing excessively weak, from what cause I cannot tell, but suppose it to result from over-anxiety about family and business affairs. I find it impossible to read or write two lines at a time without immediately experiencing an excessive fatigue, which obliges me to stop.

"I have consulted the most eminent oculists of Paris, Dr. Desmares and M. Giraud-Teulon; the remedies they have prescribed, so far from doing me any good, have, I almost think, aggravated the evil.

"In this state, *Monsieur le Curé*, I write to beg you to send me, at your earliest convenience, the quantity of water from the Grotte of Lourdes that you may consider necessary for my malady. I am preparing myself to use it by the efforts that the Almighty requires of us, when we seek to obtain at His hands some signal favour. May this privileged water, in restoring my sight, cure my soul also of more than one blindness that I deplore without knowing how to remedy it.

"You will oblige me much by adding to the parcel the pamphlet published at Tarbes, and by letting me know what I am indebted to you. The amount shall then be remitted by return of post.

"I beg you, *Monsieur le Curé*, to receive my thanks in advance, and the assurance of my most respectful sentiments."

"And now," cried de Freycinet, "the letter is written ! You have but to sign it."

I took the pen, and wrote my name and address :—

"HENRI LASSERRE,
"Rue de Seine, 95, à Paris."

I give here a reproduction by photogravure, of the fac-simile of a document which proves, with irrefutable authenticity, the deplorable state to which I was reduced.

Répondu.

"PARIS, 28bre, 1862.

"MONSIEUR LE CURÉ,—L'eau de Lourdes fait des miracles, et vous ne serez point surpris que je vienne lui en demander un de plus. Depuis deux ou trois mois ma vue s'est excessivement affaiblie, je ne sais par quelle cause ; je suppose pourtant que c'est par suite de vives préoccupations d'âme et d'esprit. Il m'est devenu impossible de lire ou d'écrire sans éprouver dès les premières lignes une insurmontable fatigue qui m'empêche de continuer.

"J'ai consulté à Paris les spécialistes les plus éminents, Mr. le Docteur Desmares et M. Giraud-Teulon ; leurs remèdes ne m'ont rien fait et parfois même il me semble qu'ils ont aggravé le mal.

"C'est dans cet état que je viens, Monsieur le Curé, vous prier de m'envoyer le plus tôt possible la quantité d'eau de la Grotte de Lourdes que vous jugerez nécessaire pour ma maladie. Je me prépare à en faire usage dans les dispositions où Dieu veut que nous soyons pour obtenir une si grande faveur ; et je souhaite que cette eau privilégiée, en me rendant l'usage de mes yeux, guérisse aussi plus d'un aveuglement de mon âme que je déplore sans y pouvoir porter remède.

"Je vous serai reconnaissant en me faisant cet envoi, d'y joindre la brochure publiée par l'Evêché de Tarbes et de m'indiquer le montant des frais que vous aurez faits pour moi et dont je vous enverrai le remboursement par le retour du courrier.

"Veuillez agréer, Monsieur le Curé, avec mes remerciements anticipés l'assurance de mes sentiments très-respectueux.

"Rue de Seine, 95, à Paris."

"HENRI LESSERRE.

Jans 2 8⁰² 1862.

~~repondre~~

Monsieur le Curé,

L'eau de Lourdes fait des miracles, et vous ne serez point surpris que j'en vienne lui en demander un de plus. Depuis deux ou trois mois ma vue s'est extrêmement affaiblie, je ne sais par quelle cause; je suppose pourtant que c'est par suite de vives préoccupations d'âme et d'esprit. Il m'est devenu impossible de lire ou d'écrire sans éprouver dès les premières lignes une insurmontable fatigue qui m'empêche de continuer. J'ai consulté à Paris les spécialistes les plus éminents, M. le Docteur Desmarest et M. Girard-Lembert; leurs réinèdes ne m'ont rien fait et parfois même il me semble qu'ils ont aggravé le mal.

C'est dans cet état que, je viens, Monsieur le Curé, vous prier de m'envoyer le plus tôt possible la quantité d'eau de la grotte de Lourdes que vous jugerez nécessaire pour ma

maladie. Je me prépare à en faire usage dans les dispositions où Dieu veut que nous soyons pour obtenir une si grande faveur; et je souhaite que cette eau privilégiée, en me rendant l'usage de mes yeux, guérisse aussi plus d'un aveuglement de mon âme que je déplore sans y pouvoir porter remède.

Je vous serai reconnaissant, en me faisant cet envoi, d'y joindre la brochure publiée par l'évêché de Tarbes, et de m'indiquer le montant des frais que vous aurez faits pour moi et dont je vous enverrai le remboursement par le retour du courrier.

Je vous prie, Monsieur le Curé, avec mes remerciements anticipés l'assurance de mes sentiments très respectueux

Henri Lasserre

rue de Seine 95
à Paris

That letter, written by Freycinet and signed by me, was immediately taken to the post.*

Thus ended the day of the 2nd of October, 1862, and the mysterious Feast of the Guardian Angels. They had attained their end, which was to place me straight into the hands of Our Lady of Lourdes.

On the morrow Freycinet came to see me.

"My dear Lasserre," he said, "since the die is cast, and you have made up your mind to try and obtain a miracle, you must bring yourself into the necessary state of grace without which the attempt will be vain. Pray go to confession; let your soul be properly prepared; accomplish the devotions commanded by your religion. You must quite understand that these things are absolutely indispensable."

"You are undoubtedly right," I replied, "and I am quite of your opinion. But you must own that you are a singular protestant. A few days ago you were preaching faith to me; now you are preaching religious practices. Our parts are strangely reversed, and anyone who could hear us, you the Protestant and me the Catholic, would be mightily astonished. I cannot conceal, alas! that the impression produced would not be in my favour."

"I am a scientific man," returned Freycinet, "and since we are trying an experiment we must strictly observe all its rules. I reason as in Natural Science or Chemistry."

* Fifteen years later, in 1877, after the death of Mgr. Peyramale, Curé of Lourdes, the original of the letter was found amongst his papers and returned to me. Thus I have now been able to publish the text of which I had forgotten the exact terms. The word *répondu* written across the top of the first page is in the handwriting of Mgr. Peyramale.

To my shame be it said, I did not at all prepare myself as my judicious friend had so wisely advised me to do. I was in a moral crisis and the state of my soul was bad. My mind was deeply troubled, agitated, and inclined to evil.

Still I recognised the necessity of going and throwing myself at the feet of the Priest! But not having committed any of those gross and material faults against which the mind suddenly revolts, I put it off from day to day. Human nature rebels more easily against the sacrament during the temptation than when it has committed the fault by which it is abased and humiliated. It is more difficult to struggle and resist than to ask pardon after the defeat. Who has not experienced this? . . .

III.

I divided my time between Wladimir and Freycinet. But although I had come to Paris expressly to meet the former, it was of the latter I saw the most; for Wladimir was unfortunately taken up, to his own annoyance as much as to mine, by the duties and obligations of social intercourse.

"Mon très cher" (it was thus he usually addressed me), "Mon très cher," he would say, "I am like Saint Paul, I do not do what I would, and what I do, I detest. I should like so much to pass all my time with you and enjoy something of the delights of intimacy, but instead of that, I am obliged to lavish and waste the greater part of my time with a crowd of uninteresting people most of whom are mortally dreary."

"Those are the pleasures of the world," I answered

laughing: "according to my friend Freycinet, they generally consist in 'boring oneself with people that one bores'."

"Who is your friend Freycinet?"

"He is a man a hundred times cleverer than I, and almost as clever as you. Of a clear, penetrating intellect, and in search of the Truth."

"In search of the Truth. Does he not, then, possess it?"

"Not altogether. But he is seeking it. He is a Protestant, or rather, simply a philosopher. Shall I introduce him to you? Unless I am much deceived you would be delighted with each other."

"Impossible, *mon très cher*, I am but passing through Paris, and I am already crushed under the weight of my social obligations. If your friend is such as you describe him to be, I shall gain nothing by knowing him, but an additional regret in leaving you."

"Look here," resumed Wladimir. "Could you not come to Rome in spite of the bad state of your eyes? You could easily find a secretary there."

"Alas, dear Miro, how I should like it, and how I should enjoy resuming our delightful life of last winter! But that wish is only a dream. Yes, a dream! Unless, indeed, I obtain a miracle, which, by the advice of my friend Freycinet, I have resolved to solicit of the Blessed Virgin."

"What! Why, you told me he was a Protestant!"

"And so he is."

"And he gives you such advice as that?"

"Certainly."

I told him all about the trial I proposed to make,

at the same time recommending myself to his fervent prayers.

But Wladimir knew that miracles are rare, and, notwithstanding his sincere piety and lively faith, he did not seem to build up any great hopes on this recourse to Our Lady of Lourdes. The Apparitions of Mary at the Grotto of Massabiella, and the miraculous cures already obtained, were not yet generally known, and it was only later on, that universal rumour spreading through the entire universe, incited people to hope in that blessed name. No pilgrimage had as yet answered the voice of Our Lady of Lourdes, asking for processions; and the pious crowds which now flock to the celebrated Spring did not direct their steps thither till some years afterwards.

CHAPTER III.

DIVINE ACTION.

I.

About a week passed in this way, and then Wladimir set off on the road to Rome.

Every time Freycinet saw me, he enquired if I had had any news of the miraculous water. A letter from the Curé of Lourdes soon arrived, informing me that the water of the Grotto had been forwarded, and would reach me before long.

We waited impatiently for its arrival; but, will it be believed that my Protestant friend's anxiety was far greater than my own? One morning—it was the Friday, 10th October, 1862—I was waiting for Freycinet in the Galérie d'Orleans at the Palais-Royal. We were going to lunch together.

As I was first on the spot, I looked in at the different shop windows of the Galérie, and read on the shop-front of Dentu's library, two or three advertisements of new books. My eyes immediately began aching at the sight of the large print and were overwhelmed with fatigue. This little incident depressed me extremely, for it showed me more clearly than ever the extent of my misfortune.

In the afternoon, I dictated two or three letters to Freycinet, and left him at four o'clock to return home. As I was going upstairs, the *concierge* called me.

"Here is a parcel for you from the railway," he said, showing me a little white wooden box, on which was written my address and the words, "Natural Water," added probably for the information of the Custom House. It was the water from Lourdes.

My heart beat wildly, but I maintained an outward calm.

"Very well," I said to the *concierge*, "I will take it presently." I went out again into the street, where I walked up and down for some time in great agitation.

"The matter is becoming serious," I thought; "Frey-cinet was right, I must prepare myself. Unless I purify my conscience, I really cannot ask God to work a miracle in my favour; for it is not possible to implore such a grace of Him, when my heart is filled with voluntary sins,—I must make an effort to heal my soul, before I beseech him to cure my body."

Turning over these grave considerations in my mind, I directed my steps towards the house of my confessor, the Abbé Ferrand de Missol, who lived in my neighbourhood. Fortunately, I was sure to find him, for it was Friday, and I knew he always remained at home on that day.

At home he certainly was, but a number of people were already waiting for him in his ante-room, and would naturally see him before me. Besides which, a member of his family had unexpectedly arrived. His servant gave me all these details, and advised me to come back after his dinner, about seven o'clock.

I resigned myself to that course.

On the step of the street door I stopped. My mind, under the influence of a singular reaction, was a prey

to a hundred worldly ideas. The evil spirits were working on their side, and I wavered between the wish to go and make a visit and the thought of going back home to pray. My inclinations were strongly on the side of the amusement, but a sacred and paternal voice, a voice that seemed weak only because I was so little accustomed to heed it, called me to meditation and prayer. I hesitated several minutes. . . .

Finally the right inclination was the strongest, and I turned down the *rue de Seine*.

I took the little box, to which was attached a notice on the Apparitions, from my *concierge*, and ran upstairs.

When I got into my room I knelt at the side of my bed, and, all unworthy as I was to turn my eyes to heaven or speak to God, I prayed.

Then I rose. On coming in I had placed the box and the little book on the chimney-piece. Every minute I turned to look at the case containing the mysterious water, and I had a presentiment that something great was about to happen in that solitary room. I was afraid to touch with my unsanctified hands the box which held the sacred liquid; on the other side, I was strangely tempted to open it and ask for my cure, even before the confession that I intended making that evening. The inward struggle lasted a certain time, how long I could not precisely say; it ended by a prayer.

"Yes, O Lord!" I cried, "I am a miserable sinner, unworthy to raise my voice to You or to touch a thing that You have blessed. But the very excess of my misery must excite Your compassion. O Lord! I fly to

You and to the Blessed Virgin Mary full of faith and confidence, and out of the depths I cry to You. This evening I will confess my sins to Your minister, but my faith cannot and will not wait. Pardon me, O Lord, and heal me. And you, Mother of Mercy, deign to come to the help of your unhappy child!"

Having comforted myself by this appeal to the Divine goodness, I dared to open the little box. Inside I found a bottle of limpid water, carefully packed. I took out the cork and poured some of the water into a cup, then I took a towel from my drawer. All these ordinary preparations that I went through with minute care were marked, I remember, by a secret solemnity that struck me at the time, as I came and went in my room. I was not alone in that room, manifestly the presence of God was there, and the Blessed Virgin whom I had invoked was probably there too.

A warm and vivifying faith had descended into my heart and inflamed my soul.

When all was ready I knelt down again.

"O Blessed Virgin Mary, have pity on me, and heal me of my blindness, moral and physical!"

And in pronouncing these words with a heart full of confidence, I rubbed my eyes and forehead with the towel I had dipped in the water of Lourdes. The action did not occupy thirty seconds.

Judge of my amazement, I might almost say my terror! I had hardly touched my eyes and forehead with the miraculous water when I felt myself cured, suddenly, abruptly, without transition, and with such rapidity, that in my imperfect language I can only compare it to a flash of lightning. By a strange contra-

diction of human nature, I had believed my faith which promised my cure, and now I could not believe my eyes, which assured me that my cure was accomplished! No! I could not believe my senses. So much so, that I fell into the sin of Moses and struck the rock twice. I continued to pray and bathe my eyes, not daring to put my cure to the proof. In about ten minutes, however, the vital energy that flooded my eyes left me no longer in doubt.

"I am cured!" I cried.

And I ran to my book-case to reach a book and read—but I stopped.

"No! no! it is not *any* book I can read at this moment!"

I took from my mantelpiece the pamphlet relative to the Apparitions of Our Lady of Lourdes, which had been sent with the case containing the water. Surely that was but justice. I read a hundred and four pages without stopping, and without experiencing the least fatigue; whereas twenty minutes before I could not have read three lines.

And if I was obliged to stop at the hundred and fourth page, it was because it was five-and-twenty minutes to six in the evening, and at that hour on the 10th of October, it is almost night in Paris. When I shut the book they were lighting the gas in the shops. That evening I went to confession and told the Abbé Ferrand de Missol of the amazing grace the Blessed Virgin had vouchsafed me. He allowed me to communicate the following morning in thanksgiving to God, and in view of strengthening the resolutions with which such an event would naturally inspire me.

II.

As I have already said, Wladimir had left Paris.

Astonishing consequences ! It was because Wladimir, returning from the German Grand Duchy had to pass through Paris, that I hastened up from the country to see him. If Wladimir's journey had not called me to the Capital I should have remained in Périgord and should not have been brought into the way of that interview with my old friend Freycinet, which was to be so fraught with extraordinary results. That is not all. If on the day of my arrival, the 2nd October, I had found Wladimir at his hotel at half-past one ; if just at that moment he had not gone out for a turn of twenty minutes or half an hour, I should not have thought of enquiring about Freycinet and should not have gone (almost to kill time) to the house where I met him and where his conversation decided me. . . . In a word, I should, in all probability, have allowed the moment of grace and the divine opportunity to escape me.

And the date of the 2nd October is precisely, in the Catholic calendar, the universal feast of the Guardian Angels, and the day of their greatest influence on earth. . . .

In the delicate arrangements of all these conjunctures,—in the marvellous disposal of all the details,—the long and gradual preparation of circumstances which were to lead me on the road to the Miracle,—the masterly dovetailing of all the incidents and their constant tendence to the same object—the careful elaboration of hours and minutes,—the strange choice

of the day for the decisive action on my rebellious will ; who, O Lord, would not recognise the hand, celestially intelligent, and tenderly maternal, of Your heavenly messengers, invisibly mixed up with the life and actions of Your human creatures ? . . . Yes, truly, O Lord, the intervention of Your holy angels is evident to the simplest regard of believing reason :—but, beyond the material benefaction of my sight restored, had You not, O Lord, another object and other inscrutable intentions far above the powers of my mind to investigate ?

CHAPTER IV.

SOLESMES.

I.

During the two days that succeeded the Miracle, I continued to bathe my eyes with the water of Lourdes, expressing, at the same time, by a vocal prayer my feelings of gratitude. But, by degrees, I came to consider the excellent state of my sight as an acquired fact, a clear profit in my favour requiring no more prolonged thanksgivings or unlimited prayers. I had confessed and communicated, I therefore soon began to consider myself quit, and resume the usual indifference of my customary way of life. In full possession of the benefit, I began, alas ! to be ungrateful towards the Benefactor.

Five days after my cure, on the 15th October, I made, in the afternoon, a rather long visit ; and it happened that in the heat of animated conversation, something like a bad vapour, a moral miasma, rising up in my heart, tempted me to say things, on the subject of which my duty imposed the most absolute silence.

At that moment, the grace which God had so marvellously and so recently granted me presented itself to my memory. "Wretch !" I thought, "will you now deliberately offend God ?"

A secret but terrible struggle took place in my trembling soul while I continued talking. Good and evil assailed me with equal force. For a few words to be uttered or not, an invisible and desperate combat was going on within me between the heavenly armies and the infernal legions. We read sometimes in history of two opposing forces concentrating all their efforts, and fighting desperately for some old ruined barn or barren hill, or clump of trees; the fate of two great nations being decided by the victory gained on a spot apparently so narrow, so insignificant, so valueless. In one of Napoleon's great battles where his fate was at issue, all depended on the storming of a mill occupied by the enemy. To leave them that mill was to lose the empire; on the other hand, to get possession of it was to conquer the world.

A similar and equally formidable battle was raging in my heart at that instant. That word to be uttered or rejected had roused all the powers of heaven and hell to mortal combat in the lists of my soul. And my will, master of itself in every way, independent and calm in the midst of my conscience that God had stirred up against myself, and my passions that the arch-fiend was lashing to a fury; my will, free and tranquil, could decide the victory as it pleased. I had the baseness to give that victory to my passion—to drive God away. I spoke.

The struggle had lasted so long that my fault was not the result of a surprise or a sudden thoughtless movement. It was committed coldly and deliberately. In perpetrating it I measured all the extent of its gravity, but I *would* do it.

II.

A man of Freycinet's elevated mind would naturally be much struck by the miracle of my cure in which Providence had given him so direct a share ; and I regret that motives of discretion and delicacy prevent my stopping an instant, at this point of my narrative, to contemplate the image evoked in my memory of the friend of my youth meditating on the extraordinary event which had taken place under his eyes. I regret to be obliged to limit myself to my own history.

I must, however, restore to its true proportions an incident revealed since that time and most erroneously related by the newspapers.

A few days after the miraculous event of which I had been the object, Freycinet expressed a desire to make the acquaintance of an eminent Religious of whom I had often spoken to him, the illustrious Dom Guéranger, Abbot of Solesmes. I had several times been, for weeks together, the guest of the Benedictines, and the R. F. Abbot honoured me with a paternal affection. I was therefore delighted to accompany my friends M. and Mme. de Freycinet and introduce them to him.

We left Paris on the Wednesday evening, 15th of October.

Among the buildings of the Abbey of Solesmes is a tower reserved for guests which I was in the habit of occupying during my visits to the Benedictines. This time I had my usual room in it, but, the monastic rule forbidding the reception of women within the cloister walls, my friends could not lodge in the tower with me.

Dom Guéranger, however, would not permit them to go to the village inn. He hospitably placed them in a house near at hand belonging to the Monastery. Every day the Brother Cellarer sent them their meals prepared in the Monastery kitchen at the same time as those of the monks.

The Father Abbot had long and frequent conversations with them. He was delighted with them, and they with him. By the elevation of his thoughts, his prodigious knowledge, his amiable simplicity and the distinction of his manners, that Monk, so austere with himself, so strict according to report and so inflexible in his orthodoxy, produced on Freycinet an impression of admiring surprise. Notwithstanding the description I had given of him, he had expected to find in Dom Guéranger a rather severe rigorist wanting to force his belief on everybody; and he met instead, a man full of cordial tolerance and scrupulous respect for the liberty and opinions of others. In accepting the hospitality of the Monastery, my Protestant friend had naturally expected to live as the Monks did; if not according to all the observances of that modern Desert, at least in obedience to the Catholic precepts relative to abstinence from meat on certain fixed days. But on the morrow of his arrival, which was a Friday, he saw a Lay-Brother place a roast fowl on the table. . . . Dom Guéranger entering towards the end of the meal, Freycinet expressed his surprise, considering in what place he was staying, at seeing such a dish on such a day.

"The Commandments of the Church only oblige those within the pale of the Church," replied the old

man with a gentle smile; "in becoming my guests you have not ceased to be your own masters. For which reason I gave orders that you should be served as you would have been in your own house."

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What were Freycinet's impressions at Solesmes? What thoughts were at work in his mind during his confidential talks with the old Benedictine Monk? Why did he not penetrate further on the road in which it seemed to me that God was then leading him? What passed in the depths of his soul? That is his inviolable secret, and the secret of God. I have no right to reveal what I may know of it.

When my friends left the house of the Benedictines to return to Bordeaux, Dom Guéranger murmured these words: "*Spiritus fiat ubi vult!* We must pray and wait!"

Let us go back a little.

III.

It was precisely on the afternoon preceding my departure from Paris for Solesmes that I committed the fault of which I spoke a little while ago. . . . The sharp point of remorse had immediately entered my heart, and I was preparing to relieve my troubled conscience by confessing my weakness to the venerable Father of the Benedictines, when, on awakening from sleep the day after my arrival, I felt the superciliary arch and the axes of the eyelids attacked anew by the well-known heaviness which had been one of the symptoms of the terrible disease from which

Our Lady of Lourdes had delivered me six days before. It was not the disease itself come back, for my sight remained clear and strong, but the permanent weight seemed like a warning and a threat, the hand of God stretched over me ready to strike; it was a sign from heaven which said "Take care!"

I was terrified: but I thought of my fault, my baseness, my ingratitude, and I was not deceived as to the cause of what had happened to me.

"My worthy friend," I said to myself, employing a familiar expression, "you have only got what you deserve."

IV.

While I was in this state, and just as my friends the Freycinets left the Abbey, where I prolonged my stay for another week, I received a letter from the R. F. Gratry. He had been greatly impressed by what he had heard of my supernatural cure, and had written to ask me if it was true, requesting me, at the same time, to give him all the details. His letter was dated from Tours.

I replied by sketching him an outline of what had happened:—the Miracle, testifying to the All-powerful mercy of Our Lady of Lourdes:—my prompt forgetfulness of the benefit:—the fault of which I had been guilty, and the present threat of punishment testifying that the God of Goodness is also the God of Justice.

"At the same time," I added, "it is but a threat which has in no way affected the reality and completeness of my miraculous cure. I continue to be able to read or write for hours together, by daylight or lamplight, without effort, difficulty, or fatigue.

Only now, there is a dull heaviness in the upper part of the eyelid which makes it feel every minute as if it was going to fall over the eyeball. I am, as you may suppose, in a constant state of alarm. I might compare myself to Damocles. Nothing is changed, yet all is changed. Not one dish has been removed from the royal feast, but a sword is hanging over my head by a single thread, which will fall, for certain, at the first moral backsliding. I did not think to bring any of the water of Lourdes with me; so that I cannot bathe my eyes in it again before my return to Paris. I shall do so then, praying the Blessed Virgin at the same time to have pity on me once more. Do you pray for me also that she may be favourably inclined towards me.

"But, since you are at Tours, my dear, good Father, I shall come round that way to-morrow or the day after, on my return to Paris, so as to see you and tell you in detail what I am now briefly writing."

Two days after, I stopped at Tours, in the interval between two trains, and climbed, on the banks of the Loire, the hill which leads to the country-house of the Oratorians.

In the course of my long talk with the R. F. Gratry, he happened to mention the name of M. Dupont.

"M. Dupont!" I cried, "why, it is at Tours that he lives! How could I be here ever since this morning, and never once remember that remarkable man? I shall certainly not lose the opportunity of paying him a visit. Where does he live?"

"Rue Saint Etienne 10."

I went to the street, which is close to the cathedral.

One word will suffice to explain my eagerness. M. Dupont was reputed to have received the gift of miracles. The blessing of heaven was upon his house, the words of the Gospel and the prophecy of Isaias were there literally realised :—“ *Cæci vident, claudi ambulant, leprosi mundantur, surdi audiunt.* The blind see; the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear.” And that simply by his anointing them with a miraculous oil.

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CHAPTER V.

THE SACRED FACE.

I.

M. Dupont was at home when I arrived. I was shown into a large room on the ground-floor, and while waiting for the master of the house, I looked curiously around me. The furniture was very simple ; here and there *ex-votos* were hanging on the wall ; beside a large table covered with papers, stood a reading-desk in the form of a lectern, supporting a large open *in-folio*. I recognised the Bible. But what chiefly attracted and fixed my attention and thoughts, was an engraving of the Sacred Face, representing the visage of Our Lord as the impression of it was left, the day of the Passion, on the veil of Veronica. This engraving was hanging over the writing-table, and before it burned a lamp, whose soft light floated on the limpid oil contained in a crystal cup.

The door opened and M. Dupont entered. He was a tall, handsome old man, of about sixty or sixty-five, still vigorous and upright.

I looked at him with religious curiosity.

At first sight the aspect of the man, whose beneficent hands had cured so many diseases, and succoured so many miseries, had something austere in it which almost approached severity. His countenance was full of an

august dignity that inspired respect, and the grand lines of his face, regular, but perhaps a little cold, tempered with a touch of fear, the irresistible veneration which his presence inspired in the beholder. His fine eyes were at the same time calm, powerful, and penetrating, but, if I remember well, overshadowed by thick bristling eyebrows. His nose well-shaped, but a little large, the outline of his mouth pure but firm, his forehead high and wide and shaped in a magnificent mould, completed the royal air of authority that characterised the whole face.

This imposing personage stood before me while I tried to control my embarrassment.

"I have no other object in calling on you," I said, "but to make your acquaintance. And that wish has its origin in the reports I have heard of the marvels and miracles accomplished here."

"Yes, sir," he replied, with an indescribable accent and a familiarity of language, that seems especially to belong to the friends of God. "Yes sir, it is now eleven years ago, since in this room, and before that Sacred Face, Our Lord began to show His power. And He deigned to manifest it in the house of a wretch like me, to show that human merit had no part in it, but that He alone accomplishes all."

He had hardly begun talking to me of the things of God when the rigid expression of his countenance changed, as the cold mists of night vanish, and the aspect of nature brightens before the glad rays of the May sun rising above the mountains.

The apparent severity which had intimidated me for an instant had quite disappeared. M. Dupont talked

with unreserved cordiality; he had all the charm of ripe experience, extreme affability, and child-like simplicity; and it was with difficulty I retraced the impression of masterly power, which had struck me so much at first. Strength was transformed into grace. The inner life and thoughts of the heart in animating the cold lines and strong features, lighted them with the reflection of heavenly goodness. It was as if the soul of Vincent de Paul had suddenly transformed the expression of the face of a Joseph de Maistre; as if Mercy had shed the radiance of her divine benignity on the marble features of Justice. When I saw him enter, firm and dignified, I said to myself:—"He is a just man". Now I added: "He is a Saint".

"What," I asked him, "was the origin of these wonders? I only know them by general report, and that is always confused."

"I never thought," he replied, "I could not possibly foresee that the room we are in would become a place of pilgrimage, where numberless miracles would be accomplished. But such were the designs of the Almighty."

At these last words, his voice slightly trembled. He resumed:—

"In 1851, on Palm Sunday, I went to see the Mother Prioress of the Convent of the Carmelites. That very day she had received from Rome ten engravings of the Sacred Face. 'If you would like some,' she said to me, 'take those you prefer.' I chose two, one for myself, and one for the Perpetual Adoration. On the following day, which was Holy Monday, I gave the sacred engraving to be framed immediately, but the

workman did not bring it home till the Wednesday morning. I then placed it over the bureau just as you see it now."

"While I was looking at it a kind of imperative feeling rose in my heart, and I asked myself: 'Can the Divine Face of our Lord remain exposed in the house of a Christian during the great week of the Passion without being honoured by some outward sign of adoration and love?' No, truly, that must not be. It occurred to me that I might place a lamp before it, and immediately I did so.

The fear of "what will people say," however, is always present in our poor nature; and hardly had the lamp been lighted when that scruple began to excite my cowardice. It was in this room I received everyone who came to see me, my bureau was here, and I thought with a certain secret shrinking that people would all be asking me the meaning of a lamp burning in full day-light.

For a long time I meditated on the answer I could give; and at last I found one to my mind. To those who might be curious to know the meaning of that lamp burning in the day-time, I would reply: "It is to teach those who do me the honour of coming to my house that, when the business that brings them here is settled, there remains nothing to do but to talk of God or go away".

That day and the day following nobody asked me the question I was expecting. Some did not even see the lamp, others noticed it, understood and approved.

But on the Good Friday, a commercial traveller, having insisted on seeing me, to offer me some Bordeaux,

gave me an opportunity of answering as I proposed; he was so surprised that he did not seem to understand my observation, and I had to repeat it to him over again. I took it as my starting-point, and gave him some Christian counsel, which I hope was profitable to him—I sometimes think it was.

Four and twenty hours after, during the morning of Easter Eve, a pious lady of my acquaintance, who was suffering from a very bad disease of the eyes, came to see me. I showed her the Sacred Face and we said a prayer together before the Blessed Image.

On rising from our knees, the idea occurred to me (how I cannot tell) to say to my friend: "Rub your eyes a little with a drop of the oil burning in honour of the Divine Visage; perhaps it will do you good".

She dipped her finger in the oil, rubbed her eyes with it, and was suddenly cured.

From that day, cures and miracles have never ceased, and here am I, the privileged witness of continual marvels. The oil, which has been sent to a distance, has also cured a number of diseases in France and in foreign countries.

"Ah, sir," cried M. Dupont, as he finished, "God is great! God is good!"

II.

"Yes, truly," said I, after a moment's silence. "Yes, truly, God is good. These wonders do not surprise me, for I have lately been favoured with a similar grace myself; but I did not prove myself deserving of it, and now I feel the hand of God threatening me and ready to throw me back into my former state."

I then told him all about my disease, my cure, and the half-relapse, of which I explained the cause.

"Accidents of that kind often occur," he said, "or even more complete relapses, and I have noticed that they generally proceed from one of two causes: either having shrunk from bearing witness before men; or having neglected to return thanks to God."

"It was not the first cause with me," I replied, "for I never hesitated to witness to the Miracle that had been worked in me; but, alas! I did not return thanks. Out of the ten lepers healed, spoken of in the Gospels, only one returned to give thanks to the Lord; I was amongst the nine others. Forgetful and ungrateful, I resumed my usual way of life, and at the moment of trial I failed."

"All faults can be repaired," said M. Dupont. "We will invoke the Lord, we will pray before the Sacred Face, and anoint your eyes with the miraculous oil. Let us hope that some good will come of it." . . .

"No! no!" I interrupted, quickly; "I have been cured once by the Blessed Virgin honoured at Lourdes. I have slighted her goodness; but I have the conviction that she will obtain my forgiveness. I feel as if I ought not to have recourse to any intercession but hers; and it almost seems as if I should be wanting in respect to the Queen of Angels if I asked help from any other power."

M. Dupont smiled.

"Heaven has no such jealousy as that," he said, gently; "however, if such is your feeling, I have here a medal given me by the Père Hermann, he dipped it himself into the water of Lourdes. It has already been

used to obtain several cures. Will you try it? Lay it successively on each eye, and let us say together: 'Blessed Virgin Mary, show yourself as powerful at Tours as you have been in the Grotto of Lourdes!'"

I knelt down and did as he said; but I felt no relief. We renewed the attempt several times, without any result.

"Well," said M. Dupont quietly, raising his eyes as if he were speaking to some one present, "Well, Holy Virgin Mary, since you refuse us this favour, we will now apply to your Son".

He then dipped his finger in the oil burning before the Sacred Face, and anointed my eyelids, my brow, my eyebrows, every part affected by the painful and threatening heaviness. His face had suddenly assumed a striking and majestic expression of authority. . . . He reminded me of Moses, . . . and it no longer surprised me that nature should sometimes obey him.

"Do you feel no relief?" he asked me.

"Alas! none," I replied. "But perhaps as the heaviness and dull weariness do not compose a sharp suffering nor an obstacle to my using my eyes and seeing very well, my deliverance may come without my knowing it. For the moment, however, I cannot perceive any change." M. Dupont appeared surprised at the resistance of the evil.

"You must dine with me, and this evening we will renew our supplications to God."

I shared M. Dupont's repast. His delightful conversation was that of a man of the world who might have travelled amongst a people of saints in the company of angelic spirits.

After dinner he anointed my eyes afresh ; still without effect. But although he seemed distressed, neither his faith nor his firm hope were disturbed by the apparent rigour of Divine Mercy.

"Do not be anxious," he said ; "here is a little bottle of oil from the lamp before the Sacred Face. We will consider what has just passed as the commencement of a Noveno. You must anoint your eyes yourself and join in the prayers that are recited here from eleven till two. I will pray for you every day."

When we separated he allowed me to embrace him, and the same evening I returned to Paris.

III.

On getting up the next morning I anointed my eyes before going out.

Towards the beginning of the afternoon as I was walking in the street on my way to business, I suddenly became aware that the feeling of heaviness had disappeared, and that the potent fluids of health had penetrated beneath my eyelids, revivifying the nerves and muscles in the region of the eyes.

The heavenly favour had come upon me all at once in a torrent, like summer rain long desired, and which, when least expected, pours out its grateful flood upon the thirsty earth.

I instantly thought of M. Dupont's promise, and I had an intuition that the servant of God was then on his knees praying for me.

CHAPTER VI.

THE TESTIMONY.

I.

In the brief letter I had written to the Abbé Peyramale informing him of my miraculous cure, I said that a little later on, I would send him as complete a narrative as possible of the different circumstances under which it had taken place. I now wrote the narration. But human events are like undulating hills and wide-spread landscapes. Only at a distance can we properly seize the fine outlines, the real place of everything, the importance of certain details and the striking harmony of the whole. Besides which, the progressive lapse of time often produces new circumstances which throw an unexpected light on past events and determine their actual character.

It was only by the light of his future destiny that I at last understood with perfect clearness the formal intentions of Almighty God in employing the young Pole Wladimir as the cause and instrument of my journey to Paris, and in consequence, as the occasion of my meeting Freycinet on the Blessed Feast of Guardian Angels. For which reason I did not even think of going back in my narrative to that starting-point, considering it without interest or importance.

I confined myself to relating the direct action of Freycinet as it has just been read, and the episode of M. Dupont. It is superfluous to add that I made my written deposition with the scrupulous care necessitated by the gravity of the important event of which I was giving an account. But for greater certainty I submitted the text, sentence by sentence, to Freycinet and M. Dupont.

"It is all accurate," said Freycinet, "there is nothing to add or to take away; it is quite a photograph. But I notice a few words here and there that I should like you to suppress; they add nothing to the relation and appear to me useless or beside the question."

I hastened to oblige him by crossing off all he objected to. And although his share in my extraordinary cure was no secret for anyone, although, in the extensive circle of our mutual friends, he liked to relate the event, or make me relate it, I did not think fit to write his name, but designated him by the appellation of "M. de ———".

The name is ever dear to me, and in spite of many divergences in our ways of seeing, judging, and acting, will never cease to arouse a feeling of eternal gratitude in my heart. If I print it now, it is because it has been divulged, since that time and without my consent, by the press of the two continents, and, in consequence, published millions of times. Besides that, the imaginary circumstances and inventions with which that period of my life has been embellished have imposed on me the duty, as a man and a historian, of re-establishing every detail in its primitive form.

II.

I went with my manuscript to Tours to communicate it to M. Dupont.

In reading it aloud to my venerable listener, I suppressed, as may be supposed, all those parts relating to the portrait I had given of himself, and such reflections as might have wounded his humility. . . . But he probably guessed what I concealed from him. After listening with great attention, the saintly old man said :

"Nothing can be more rigorously exact than the incident you relate. I have recognised in listening to you, the very words we employed in our conversation. You have truthfully repeated everything that passed here."

Such complete approbation would have given me unmixed pleasure, if M. Dupont's accents in thus expressing himself had not made me anxious for what was to follow.

"And yet," he added, "I must beg you to cross out all mention of this last incident from your narrative. You must tell of nothing but the miracle accomplished by Our Lady of Lourdes." . . .

"Impossible!" I cried. "Although it is true, that Our Lady of Lourdes has cured me, and that without any relapse, it is none the less true that the dark threat immediately following my fault, and the sudden disappearance of that threat the day after my visit to you, are supernatural facts too closely connected with the principal event for me to have the right to omit them, even at your urgent request."

"Still you must," he replied firmly. "Your narration, which cannot fail to be published, will do great good, and spread far and wide the glory of Our Lady of Lourdes."

"Yes, but then, why should I not include in this statement my station before the Sacred Face venerated here? Is not that also the truth, and might not that truth also do good to a great number of souls?"

"The Lord has His own ways," he replied. "The Apparitions of Lourdes have attracted public attention from the beginning. The Christian press, and later on the Charge of the Bishop of Tarbes, have made them known; polemics have been engaged. . . . But it has been otherwise with what has passed in my own poor house. That has been quite outside newspapers or books. Devotion to the Sacred Face has been gradually spread by personal confidences from one to another, amongst the humble and those of no account. I desire, and I believe it to be God's will, that things should continue thus . . . at least for the present. There is, says the Scripture, a time to keep silence, and a time to speak. At present we are at the first time."

As I still insisted, he raised his hand, and pointing to the soft, fair light burning before the Sacred Face—

"Publicity would extinguish that lamp," he said quietly.

"God forbid! I will suppress whatever you like. . . . But I hope there will come a time, when I shall be able to re-establish in its place all that to-day you oblige me to bury in silence."

"Yes. And when that hour comes, you will be free ;

but, until then, be content to indicate by typographic signs, that something is suppressed and wanting in your original text."

This, then, is the reason why, in every edition of "Our Lady of Lourdes," the long paragraph relating to M. Dupont was replaced by a double line of dots, showing the reader that a voluntary blank existed in that chapter of my book. The moment is now come to fill it up.

III.

Having left a copy of my manuscript with the "Holy Man of Tours," I sent my authentic narration to Lourdes, revised and verified successively by Freycinet and M. Dupont.*

It appears that the Curé Peyramale was greatly moved by the narrative; and while still under the impression caused by his emotion, he had a sort of presentiment of the future. When he went, that day or

* The copy that I gave to M. Dupont was found amongst his papers after his decease, by his biographer, the Abbé Janvier, who published a long fragment of it four years ago, in his *Life of that Man of God*, Volume II., pages 309 to 315 (edition of 1879); p. 289 to 295 of the 12mo edition of 1882, and pp. 334 to 342 of the abridged edition. The Abbé Janvier has quoted the fragment very correctly, but he has committed a considerable and complete error in calling my state a *relapse*; an error that he proposes to rectify in future editions. No relapse, thank Heaven, had taken place, and my narration indicates with the most scrupulous precision that all-important shade. The alarming heaviness which manifested itself after a fault, in no manner prevented my reading and writing, and did not in the least affect my sight. It was only, as I said further back, a sort of threat intended to rouse my fears and prevent my falling again into any act of ingratitude. My disease was completely cured by Our Lady of Lourdes, and it has never reappeared.

the day following, to the hospital of Lourdes to visit the "Sisters of Nevers," who nurse the sick and instruct the children, he read the pages of my relation to them.

Then, after a moment of silence, he pronounced the following words in his grave firm voice :—

"That man will be the historian of Our Lady of Lourdes! The Blessed Virgin has chosen him and restored his sight for that."

IV.

A few days after my return from Solesmes and my journey to Tours, I started for Rome to rejoin my friend Wladimir. What delightful months we passed together. What thoughts we exchanged! What intimate confidences! What exquisite animation and charm, what grace and affability on his part! What pleasure and enjoyment on mine! Why, alas! must the fairest dreams have a waking, and the brightest days remain sometimes without a morrow? Why are minds the most harmoniously united jarred in a fatal hour by some discordant chord? Why does it happen that youthful friendships are not always proof against time and long separation? Why are some broken and others abandoned? Had Providence brought us so closely together simply that my friend at Rome might perform in the miraculous event the part traced out for him? I cannot tell.

The summer heat brought me back to France, and I left the capital of the Christian world. I have never returned there since. Wladimir and I maintained a

profound affection and esteem for each other, but the delightful intimacy that had lent such a charm to our intercourse chilled and perished untimely. It was a Spring without a Summer; a dawn without a day. Thus, in the vast plains of the country of the Slavs, the horizon grows gradually clear, night disappears and morn begins to dawn. The pleased traveller starts on his way, rejoicing in the prospect of daylight. Undeceive yourself, traveller! The shadows fall afresh—it was the Aurora-Borealis; and what you took for the first rays of the rising sun were but the fleeting meteors of the frigid zone. . . .

CHAPTER VII.

DIGITUS DEL.

I.

Twenty years have passed away.

Since the day of my cure by Our Lady of Lourdes, my sight has never ceased to be excellent. Since the last time I anointed them with the oil from before the Sacred Face during the prayer of M. Dupont, the alarming threat that for a brief period had weighed down my eyelids has entirely disappeared, and I have never had any return of it. Neither assiduous reading, nor the volumes I have written, nor the artificial light of lamps or candles, nor the dazzling rays of the sun have ever fatigued my eyes. Miraculously restored to their natural condition they have since followed the ordinary and regular course of all things relating to the human organization. When I had reached my fiftieth year, and had entered my second half-century, I could see at a distance better than before, but not quite so well close to : therefore, like most people of my age, I took to wearing glasses for my literary work. In curing me by a miracle the Blessed Virgin did not dispense me from growing old.

Twenty years have passed away. And Time, raising by degrees in his progress the thick veil which at first

hid such and such lines in the divine plan, has replied in a manner at once clear and enigmatic to the questions I had so often asked myself.

In the supernatural event of which the history has just been read, four men, *seemingly taken at hazard in the crowd*, had unexpectedly been brought together—four men having each his personal part and special share—four men placed in order, so to speak, to be the instruments of God's power and the successive witnesses of His intervention. The reader is acquainted with them.

The first was myself—the object of the Miracle;

The second was the protestant—Charles de Freycinet;

The third was the Pole—Wladimir;

The fourth was M. Dupont.

Why, O Heavenly Father, did You choose those four individualities? Why did You associate and group them for a moment around the Miracle accomplished by Our Lady of Lourdes, and then let them separate afterwards to follow their different paths? . . .

In the silence of my heart, I wait and watch.

* * * * *

Twenty years have passed away. What has become, Lord, of the most unworthy of those four witnesses of the Miracle? What has become of him whose diseased eyes and lost sight were restored by the all-powerful compassion of Your Immaculate Mother?

He who was cured, Henri Lasserre, has become the historian of Our Lady of Lourdes, and You have so amply blessed the humble book—the ex-voto of his gratitude—that it decided Rome—silent till then—to proclaim “the luminous evidence of the Apparitions of

Mary," and the infallible Chief of the Church, investing with his solemn approbation the work of an unknown author, hailed its publication in these terms:—" *We believe that SHE, who by the miracles of her power and goodness draws from all parts multitudes of pilgrims to her sanctuary, WILL ALSO MAKE USE OF THIS BOOK TO PROPAGATE PIETY AND CONFIDENCE STILL MORE WIDELY AMONGST MEN and ATTRACT THEIR HEARTS TOWARDS HER, so that all may participate in the plenitude of her graces.*"* And in conformity with his prophetic words, the editions have, in fact, been multiplied in a proportion and with a rapidity out of all comparison with ordinary human success. The book has penetrated everywhere, among all classes, the rich, the poor, the faithful, and the unbeliever; even into the churches, where it has been publicly read in the pulpits of innumerable parishes, in the form of a Month of Mary; it has been spontaneously translated into every language, English, German, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Flemish, Dutch, Breton, Polish, Hungarian, Slavonic; even into the Eastern dialects, Chinese and Tamoul; it has been printed and reprinted in Paris, London, Madrid, Barcelona, Lisbon, Amsterdam, Ghent, Luxembourg, Fribourg in Brissgau, Trent, Modena, Buda-Pesth, Warsaw, Laybach, New York, Bogota, Rio-Janiero, Pondichery, and Chang-Hai. The book, as popular in America as in the Old Continent, has penetrated into every country, and, by the grace of God, accomplishes its apostolic work, repeating, in the name of the Queen of Heaven, the echo of our Lord's words: "Come unto Me, all you that labour and are bur-

* See Appendix, Note VI., the Latin text and translation of the Brief of His Holiness.

dened, and I will refresh you". And nations, moved by the reading of that simple history of the Apparitions and Miracles, have hastened to send pilgrimages from all parts of the world, to the Grotto of Lourdes. A magnificent Basilica has been raised by the gold of the universe and dedicated to Our Lady of Lourdes, and beneath its shadow, in that land of marvels, thousands of wonders have been accomplished.

Thus, from an imperceptible seed that a child's hand drops into the earth, You raise, O Father of Love, a stately tree, in whose branches myriads of birds find shelter, and beneath whose shade generations to come shall seek coolness and repose. *Non nobis, Domine, sed nomini tuo de gloriam.*

Such has been the mission to which, notwithstanding his defects and shortcomings, You have deigned to call him who was the Object and consequently the first Witness of the miraculous act.

* * * * *

Twenty years have passed. What has become, Lord, of the second Witness, whom it pleased You then to employ as the conscient instrument and direct cause of the Miracle; of him whose urgent initiative, and earnest persuasion forced me, so to speak, to have recourse to Our Lady of Lourdes; of him whose hand, at my dictation, traced the letter to the Curé, Peyramale, that letter requesting a small quantity of the miraculous water, and so singularly dated, *the 2nd October, 1862*—Feast of the Holy Guardian Angels?

Charles de Freycinet has been carried by the whirlwind of Revolutionary storm to the highest functions of the state in the tempestuous government of France;

first as Delegate of War, then Minister of Public Works, Minister of Foreign Affairs and President of the Council. Such has been the remarkable destiny of the second Witness of the Miracle.

Oh! what tumultuous and agitated thoughts crowd in my mind, what questions arise as I compare certain important facts of contemporary history with the memories I have just evoked! But an imperative reserve, easily understood, checks all reflection on my lips. He alone is the Judge, who, knowing the final destiny of men, and the ultimate consequences of earthly things, rules and regulates all to His own glory. To borrow the very expressions of my early friend, Freycinet himself, I exclaim; "There is in all this such an uniformity of coincidence that, in considering it, one is almost prompted to recognize the workings of some superior power, and listen without surprise when pious souls exclaim: *Digitus Dei est hic!*" *

* * * * * *

Twenty years have passed away. What has become, O Lord, of the third witness; he who was the unconscious yet decisive cause of my supernatural cure? Of the young Slav whose rapid passage through my native land called me to Paris on the day fixed, and

* It is in his work on the war of 1870, that M. de Freycinet wrote the lines to which I refer. They are as follows:—"A succession of unfortunate coincidences was added to the organic weakness of France and frustrated all her efforts. *And that uniformity was such, that really in considering it one is prompted to enquire if it has not been guided by some power superior to that of physical causes*; a sort of expiation of national sins, or the relentless goad urging on to an indispensable effort. In the face of such immense misfortunes it is not surprising that pious souls should exclaim: "*Digitus Dei est hic!*" (Charles de Freycinet, *La Guerre en Province*, p. 350-351.)

whose providential absence from the hotel Radstadt decided me to go, in the belief that I was acting of myself, towards the house where I was to find Freycinet, and where Your grace was invisibly awaiting me? What has become of that friend of the past, who then wrote me the hurried letter of which the fac-simile has already been given, with the Post Office stamp, marking the year, the month, the day of that same Feast of the Holy Guardian Angels? The noble Pole has abandoned the life of the layman and taken holy orders. And at the time when Charles de Freycinet was Minister of Foreign Affairs and President of the Council of France, Count Wladimir Czacki, Roman Prelate, and Archbishop of Salamis arrived in France as the Pope's Nuncio. After which, rising still higher, he took his seat as Cardinal of Holy Church, on the steps of the Pontifical throne. There, on the supreme heights of ecclesiastic hierarchy, we find the third witness and instrument of the miracle accomplished by Our Lady of Lourdes on the man who was to be her historian.

* * * * *

Twenty years have passed away. What have You done, O Lord, with the fourth witness and last instrument of the supernatural action? with that saintly old man of the town of Tours who, by anointing my eyes and praying before the Sacred Face of the Crucified, obtained my deliverance from all threat of relapse, and so mingled with the benefit of the Blessed Virgin, and the events which had marked it, the direct sanction of Jesus Christ? To that one, O Lord, You have assigned a place far higher than all the seats of honour in this mortal world; higher than the Benches of Prime

Ministers or the thrones of the Princes of the Church. Hardly had M. Dupont fallen asleep in the peace of the just, when the voice of the people was heard saying, "A Blessed One has ascended into heaven !"

The Archbishop of Tours has proclaimed the glory of the Servant of God, "who died," says the episcopal ordinance, "in the odour of sanctity". The house filled with his memory has been transformed into a sanctuary, and it is said that Rome is about to introduce the cause of his Beatification. Such was the glorious end of the fourth witness of the Miracle.

* * * * *

Lord, Lord, why in the mysterious economy of Your unfathomable designs have You placed these four men side by side ; the first, future historian of Our Lady of Lourdes ; the second, future Minister of France and President of the Council ; the third, future Nuncio and Cardinal ; the fourth, a future Saint ? A quadruple coincidence such as chance could never have produced.

For what purpose was Your finger mysteriously laid on those four persons at the time of the Miracle ? What is the meaning of those four names being thus associated with the *History of Our Lady of Lourdes*, and henceforth engraved in its very foundations and corner-stone ?

II.

Sometimes, in crossing the deserts of Egypt, the explorer perceives on the pedestal of an obelisk or the base of a pyramid certain hieroglyphic signs as distinctly traced in the granite, after a lapse of three

thousand years, as if the engraver had just finished them that morning. He stops astonished and thoughtful. On one hand those characters prove that at some distant time a man had been employed in carefully and mathematically forming their curves and angles; on the other, the very thoughts they express escape his investigation. The words, so clear in their outline, are in an unknown writing and an unknown tongue. They remain an unfathomable mystery.

Thus do I contemplate with admiration the evident signs of the Omnipotent hand; and thus, at the same time, do I vainly seek to penetrate more deeply into the intentions of the Almighty. The mystic hieroglyphic has not yet revealed its secret to my baffled gaze.

But in proportion as I discerned the amazing intentions of Sovereign Wisdom; in proportion as I saw the book written by my unworthy pen scattered abroad in all nations like an apostolic seed; in proportion as those four names emerged from obscurity one after another; in proportion as all relating to that supernatural history was brought into ever-increasing relief, and providential colouring, I felt myself disappearing in the consciousness of my own misery, insignificance, and nothingness.

Minute and helpless grain of dust, carried hither and thither without knowing whither I go, or what I do, and hardly what I want; drifted about at the will of heaven in the formidable whirlwind of the divine labour, I have ever felt, and I still feel at every hour, an indescribable religious terror before such manifest signs. What am I, and who am I? How well I understand Simon Peter's cry of alarm, "Depart from me for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" What have

I done, alas ! with the many graces I have received ? and what shall I answer when You say to me, “ What ! you were employed to convert others, and you yourself are still unregenerate ; to bring back many wandering souls into the way of holiness, and you have not yet entered therein ? ” . . . O Mary, O Our Lady of Lourdes, O, Mother, save me in that terrible moment !

Yes, I feel crushed beneath the weight of my responsibility before my Judge ; and often, when perhaps others are envying me, in my turn I envy the obscure peasant ploughing underneath my window, for he will only have to give account of the progress of his plough, and the line of his furrow. But, at the same time, if these indications of a superior action on my person and my work, fill me, as a man, with a terror readily understood ; on the other hand, they console me as historian of Our Lady of Lourdes, and maintain me in profound peace notwithstanding the attacks of which I may be the object, notwithstanding public or dissimulated calumnies, and no matter who or what the calumniators.

When, in spite of myself, my soul trembles with indignation, the heavenly voice of Our Lady of Lourdes whispers in my ear :—

“ Be not troubled, neither be afraid. You have none to fear but yourself, your own extreme frailty, your passions and temptations. See how I have guided you and led you by the hand. Remember the miraculous cure of your eyes which was my first call to you, to induce you to write this History of my Apparitions and benefactions. And see how I have blessed it. Recognise the finger of God in the choice of the men He employed

as His instruments. Consider the summits on which it has pleased Him to place them, so that without any possibility of contradiction you can produce them in testimony to the unbelieving world, to Christian sacerdoce and to the whole Church. Publish all these things in the face of day, that all upright hearts may perceive in their marvellous harmonies the intervention of the Holy Angels and the guidance of the Lord. Those who deny and insult, deliberately and obstinately, will continue to insult and deny for their greater condemnation. Those who are sincere but wandering will return to the fold."

Wherefore we have thought it our duty to break silence and throw a light on certain unknown details which formerly appeared in our eyes of no value; but of which successive events have taught us the importance.

III.

We shall perhaps relate, some day, the new calls by which Our Lady of Lourdes incited us, notwithstanding our resistance, to fulfil our mission of historian; the obstacles suscitated by the Evil One, the blessings and the trials, the sympathy and the enmity which accompanied, followed and still follow, the accomplishment of that work. And then, the reader also discerning in a no less manifest manner the secret action of Providence, may recall to mind Bossuet's grand words: "Man moves, but God leads him".

APPENDIX AND PROOFS.

APPENDIX AND PROOFS.

NOTE I.

(Page 130.)

"I, the undersigned, declare that *for about thirty years* M. Macary (François), joiner, has been suffering from varicose veins in the legs. The varices, *which were of the thickness of a finger, were complicated with knotty flexuous cords strongly developed*, and required to be methodically compressed, up to the present, by the help of bandages and dog-skin gaiters. But notwithstanding these precautions ulcerations were frequent in both legs, and necessitated, whenever they appeared, absolute repose and a long and careful treatment. I have examined him to-day, and, although his lower members were free from all dressing or bandages, *I could only perceive* some few traces of his enormous varices.

"This case of *spontaneous cure* appears to me all the more surprising that the annals of science make no mention of any fact of a similar nature.

"SÉGUR,
"Consulting Physician of the Mutual Aid
Society of Saint Louis.

"LAVAUUR, 16th August, 1871."

"I, the undersigned, certify that for about thirty years M. Macary, joiner at Lavaur, has suffered from varices in the legs, accompanied with enormous nodosities and frequently compli-

cated by large ulcers, notwithstanding a constant compression by suitable bandages or gaiters. That now those varices *have suddenly disappeared*, leaving no other trace of their presence than a nodosity, sensibly diminished, on the inner and upper part of the right leg.

“ROSSIGNOL, M.D.

“LAVAUUR, 25th August, 1871.”

“Macary (François), sixty years of age, joiner at Lavaur, member of the Society of Saint Louis, consulted us about twenty years ago, for varices situated in the popliteal hollow and the inner part of the left knee and leg. A varicose ulcer was then observed in the lower part of the leg, with callous edges, and considerable obstruction; it was also most painful to the touch. There existed besides, outside and inside the upper part of the calf, two large scars, in no way connected with the affection we are treating of at present, but resulting from a gun-shot received by the patient twenty years previously. The veins were so numerous, and dilated to such an extent, that, in our opinion, the surgical means usually adopted in such cases were quite out of the question.

“Macary seemed to us condemned to a life-long infirmity, and we could only prescribe palliative remedies such as had already been recommended by several of our colleagues.

“Eighteen years later, that is, two years ago, Macary came to consult us again. The already bad state of his leg had become much worse. We were confirmed in our first opinion, and we assured him that if he wished the ulcer to cicatrise he must submit to a prolonged and absolute period of rest in bed, and a course of regular dressings.

“To-day, 15th August, 1871, Macary has presented himself for the third time. The ulcer is perfectly cicatrised. The leg is not compressed in any apparatus, *and yet there does not exist a shadow of obstruction*. What particularly strikes us is *that the varicose lumps have entirely disappeared*; and that in their place nothing is perceptible to the touch but small, hard cords, void of blood and rolling under the finger. *The inner saphena vein is of*

the usual volume, and follows its regular course. The most attentive examination has not resulted in the discovery of any trace of a surgical operation.

"According to Macary's account, this radical cure has been produced in the space of one night, and under the unique influence of the application of compresses of water taken from the spring in the Grotto of Lourdes. Whence we conclude, that, putting Macary's account out of the question, *science is powerless to explain the fact; for no author has ever quoted any similar or analogous observation.* Doctors are all agreed on one point, namely: that *neglected varices are incurable*, that they cannot be cured by palliative treatment, *and still less are they cured spontaneously, on the contrary, they continue to get worse and worse;* and in short, a radical cure cannot be hoped for, even by the patient running serious risks, without surgical aid. Thus, even if the facts attested by Macary were not proved by authentic witnesses, besides himself, it would be none the less for us *a most extraordinary and, to speak frankly, a SUPERNATURAL event.* In testimony of which we sign the present statement.

"BERNET,

"*M.D. of the Faculty of Paris.*

"LAVAUUR, 15th August, 1871.

"Seen, for the legalisation of the above signatures.

"THE MAYOR: ET. DE VOISIN.

"LAVAUUR, 3rd September, 1871.

"Seen, for legalisation of the signature of M. Etienne de Voisin-Laverniere, Mayor of Lavaur, hereto set.

"THE SOUS-PRÉFET: CELLIÈRES.

"LAVAUUR, 4th September, 1871."

NOTE II.

(PAGE 196.)

The rustic Rotunda now no longer exists (1883).

For such of our readers as had not visited Lourdes at that time, we will explain that the rustic Rotunda, covered with thatch,

like the Swiss cottages of Versailles and Trianon, was a gratuitous shelter for pilgrims, with marble tables for their meals and a supply of water. It could contain an entire pilgrimage of about seven hundred persons, and was founded by the Donor, as a perpetual testimonial of his gratitude to Our Lady of Lourdes. It was established in 1872, during the episcopate of Mgr. Pichenot, and presented to the mission of the Grotto, with the condition that they should keep it in repair. In 1877, under the direction of Father Sempé, and during the episcopate of Mgr. Jourdan, it was destroyed to make way for extensive and handsome buildings, still in course of construction, which completely change the primitive aspect of the place where the Blessed Virgin appeared.

NOTE III.

(PAGE 221.)

It is necessary here to recall, in the interests of historical precision, that the Bishops' Cottage in question is not the actual Episcopal Palace erected on the plateau des Espélugues, in 1874, with the funds of the Pilgrimage, during Mgr. Langénieux's brief passage in the diocese of Tarbes.

The "Bishops' Cottage" was situated at about two hundred metres from the Grotto, in the field of Savy, between the Gave and the brook (now turned aside and filled up) that Bernadette crossed at the time of the first Apparition. Wishing that the good works they had accomplished during their lives might survive them, those noble and pious Christian ladies of Lyons, Mesdemoiselles de Lacour, who had already presented the statue of the Grotto, caused the graceful building to be erected, and surrounded it with a large garden, fine trees, and sparkling fountains. All this was done under the direction of the Curé Peyramale, whom they profoundly venerated. After having built and completely furnished the villa, Mesdemoiselles de Lacour made a gift of it, by notarial act, dated the 29th March, 1868, for the residence, near the Grotto, of the Bishops of Tarbes. Mgr. Laurence and Mgr. Pichenot stayed in the Bishops' Cottage, and

for many years it was the residence of the prelates of every country, when they came on pilgrimage to the Fountain of Miracles. Mesdemoiselles de Lacour were thus the first benefactresses of the work, and their names should be engraved in letters of gold in the annals of the Pilgrimage.

That Foundation, which had cost the generous donors forty thousand francs, exists no longer. In 1878, about a year after the death of Mgr. Peyramale, it was destroyed under the administration of the R. F. Sempé, to make way for certain works of transformation undertaken by Mgr. Langénieux, and continued under Mgr. Jourdan, his successor. The stones, ready prepared, were used to build, at the corner of the old and new roads, near the square where the horses and carriages stand, a house of similar appearance, occupied at present by a retired tradesman, M. Berger, and a rich widow of Lourdes, Mme. Lacrampe. . . .

The disappearance of the Foundation of Mesdemoiselles de Lacour imposes on us here the duty of mentioning their signal good work, and rendering, in passing, a pious tribute of respect to their memories.

NOTE IV.

(PAGE 228.)

Although, according to our opinion, the miraculous character of an event is proved rather by the circumstances under which it takes place, than by medical certificates; although, in such cases, we admit no other judgments than that of the Church, we should consider ourselves wanting in respect to Science, and we should be suppressing important documents, if we did not here insert, as proofs, the formal declarations of Doctor Lagoutte, of Autun, and Doctor Mangin, of Baccarat. We will begin by Dr. Lagoutte :—

“I, the undersigned, Doctor of Medicine, dwelling at Autun (Saône-et-Loire), certify that Mlle. de Fontenay (Jeanne-Marie), who has been ill for a very long time, has of late years consulted Drs. Courty, at Montpellier; Bennet, at Cannes; Bouchacourt,

at Lyons ; and has been attended by them ; that they have all declared her to be suffering from a uterine affection, resulting in a nervous condition, characterised by great debility and acute pain whenever she tried to make any sustained use of her limbs ; from which cause, walking had become almost an impossibility ; that since her pilgrimage to Lourdes, in the month of August last, Mlle. de Fontenay has recovered her health, *completely and instantaneously*, and that *she can now use her limbs freely and without pain.*

“ DR. LAGOUTTE.

“ AUTUN, 31st January, 1875.”

Here, now, is Dr Mangin's declaration. We beg the reader attentively to weigh the terms (so conclusive beneath the doctor's pen) that are printed in italics.

“ I, the undersigned, Joseph-Auguste Mangin, Doctor of Medicine, domiciled at Baccarat, certify that for many years I attended Mlle. Jeanne-Marie de Fontenay, during her residence at Baccarat (she is at present living at Autun), for frequent indispositions, from which she suffered at fixed times, and which, *after many years of acute suffering, resulted in a serious and alarming state of health.*

“ She then consulted several celebrated doctors of the faculties of Strasbourg and Paris, and lastly, Dr. Courty of Montpellier. The latter, after a careful examination, acquired the certainty of *an organic lesion of the interior viscera*, which necessitated a painful treatment and several operations. This affection must evidently be considered as the beginning of all the nervous phenomena experienced by the patient, including the weakness of the lower members, which, for a long time, had rendered it *impossible for her to walk*, and had obliged her to keep her room, *extended on a sofa or in bed.* After having followed, without any apparent amelioration, different medical and surgical treatments, despairing of being cured, and animated by a lively faith and an absolute confidence in the help from On High, she undertook a pilgrimage to Lourdes, and there, in the presence of a great number of witnesses, she was, on the 15th August, of the year of grace 1874, *instantaneously cured.*

"This sudden, unusual, and unexpected cure is, in my opinion, an event positively marvellous, and extraordinary. There is in it a *Quid divinum*—a supernatural, visible, and incontestible intervention, that confounds reason, and vanquishes the obstinacy of incredulity. For nature does not generally proceed in this manner, but always operates by slow degrees.

"At Lourdes, and contrary to all prevision, that which doctors had not been able to accomplish after years of trial, was done in an instant.

"Given at Baccarat, the 16th December, 1874.

"A. MANGIN."

NOTE V.

(Page 280.)

I.

The facts contained in the narrative entitled "*The Noveno of the Curé of Algiers*," and of which the rigorous exactitude has been affirmed by the letter of M. and Mme. Guerrier, given in page 229, are fully borne out:—

(1.) As to Mme. Guerrier's state of ill-health and as to all that passed at Saint-Gobain:—by M. Biver, the father, doctor of medicine;—M. Hector Biver, Director-general of the Manufactory of Looking-glasses at Saint-Gobain;—M. Alfred Biver, Director of the Manufactory of Looking-glasses at Saint-Gobain;—M. Louis Bonnel, professor at the Lyceum of Versailles;—the Abbé Poin-dron, Curé of Saint-Gobain;—M. Danré, druggist in the same town;—and M. Viennot, formerly clerk at the War Office; who all at the same time depose that Mme. Guerrier returned from Lourdes completely cured.

(2.) As to the fact of the sudden cure accomplished the 16th of September at the sanctuary of Lourdes, in the Chapel of Sainte Germaine-Cousin, at the last mass of the Noveno of the Abbé Martignon, and as to the different details of all that passed at Lourdes:—by the R. F. Thuet, missionary of the Holy Spirit, at

present (1877) at the House at Bordeaux, rue Parmentade, 65, who served the Abbé Martignon's mass ;—by M. Lavigne, collector of the excise revenue at Lourdes ; by Mme. Détroyat ; by the Rev. Edwards, Priory of Saint Augustin, Newton, Devonshire (England) ; and by the Baron and Baroness de Férussac, rue d'Anjou, 3, Versailles, who were at Lourdes at that time.

(3.) As to Mme. Guerrier's state of ill-health, previous to her stay at Saint-Gobain, and as to all that passed at Beaune :—by the same members of her family as had seen her at Saint-Gobain ; and, besides : by MM. Leboeuf, Curé-archpriest of Notre-Dame of Beaune ;—Bouhey, curate ;—Monmont, Procureur of the Republic ;—Noirot, honorary judge ;—A. Larcher, *juge d'instruction* ;—L. Lagarde, retired recorder, and assistant Justice of the Peace ;—Henri Morelot, etc., who at the same time bear witness to her present state of perfect health.

II.

Although it was extremely painful to the Abbé Martignon to give an account of an event in which he had accomplished an act of self-sacrifice that he would have wished to keep inviolably secret, he still considered it his duty, at Mme. Guerrier's formal request, to address to the R. F. Sempé, Superior of the Missionaries of Our Lady of Lourdes, a brief notice of what had happened. He wrote it with great exactness, but it was clear that he took pains to keep in the background whatever could be turned to his own praise. As to the striking and characteristic details of the chapel where the miracle took place, they can be verified by anyone and everyone, for this sacred remembrance will doubtless render them henceforth inviolable to change.

We here give the report that Mme. Guerrier has lent us and from which, as the reader will perceive, we have borrowed a good many textual details.

“LOURDES, 19th September, 1877.

“REVEREND FATHER,

“Mme. Guerrier requests me to help her in the narrative you wish her to give you of the principal circumstances of her illness and miraculous cure, by acquainting you precisely, in what way and to what extent the name and thought of Mgr.

Peyramale were mixed with that happy event. I consent all the more willingly to her request as, in that respect especially, it is desirable that the exact value and real character of the fact should be maintained.

"For a long time I had resolved to make a fresh *Noveno* to obtain the recovery of my voice. I had fixed on the Feast of Our Lady of Seven Dolours as the term of it; not being then aware that, through its being a movable Feast, the first day of the *Noveno* would coincide this year with the Nativty of the Blessed Virgin. When Mgr. Peyramale died, I had the idea, which I communicated to several friends, of beginning my *Noveno* beside the sacred remains of that great Servant of Mary, and of asking Our Lady of Lourdes to *permit that*, on the ninth day, *he should transmit me the answer himself* in the name of her who was so justly called his heavenly parishioner.

"The choice made by Almighty God of the 8th of September as the day on which He took to Himself the venerable Curé was a sufficient authorisation for me to associate his memory with my humble supplications. On Friday the 14th, I received, as also did you, Reverend Father, a letter from the Abbé Poindron, Curé of Saint-Gobain. He urgently recommended to my care M. Guerrier, Justice of Peace at Beaune, and his wife, who for three long years had been suffering from a serious illness and was coming to Lourdes to seek a cure that her boundless confidence made her sure of obtaining.

"On Saturday the 15th, I went to the station to meet them on their arrival by the three o'clock train. Madame Guerrier had to be carried from the train to the carriage by the railway porters, who on that occasion, as always, were most delicately obliging and serviceable. The patient, being paralysed in all the lower part of her body, could not make the slightest movement. In this painful situation it was indispensable to find her a lodging on a ground-floor. The excellent M. Lavigne came to our help and extricated us from our difficulties by offering us the use of his own drawing-room. Thus the two pilgrims, without suspecting it, received the most cordial hospitality beneath the very roof that had sheltered the good Curé of Lourdes at the time of the Apparitions.

"From the first moment I saw clearly, by the calm energy with which Mme. Guerrier spoke of her cure, that her confidence came from on high.

"I then told her of the conditions in which I had begun my Noveno, asking her to join in it, and offering to *substitute her intentions for mine*. After a short rest, we all three made a first visit to the Grotto. All those who then saw the invalid carried in her chair, remarked the almost ecstatic character of her prayer.

"On her return to the house she continued praying, mixing with her devotions the memory of Mgr. Peyramale; and she continued to do so on the morrow at her waking. I had fixed eight o'clock as the hour when *I should say the Mass for her*, in which I expressly reserved the *Memento* of the dead for him whom we mourned. She arrived at the church, carried as usual.

"For the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice I had given the preference to the chapel of Saint Germaine placed near the entrance on the left of the Basilica. This precaution was rendered indispensable by the crowd of pilgrims who encumbered the crypt and the upper church.

"Mme. Guerrier heard Mass seated on her chair; in that position she also received Holy Communion. But hardly had the Host been placed on her lips when she felt herself, as she told us afterwards, urged to kneel down. Yielding to the secret impulse she rose and knelt down without any difficulty. Her husband who had just communicated at her side looked at her with tears in his eyes, not daring to speak to her. After Mass her thanksgivings lasted some time before those near her felt convinced of the certainty of the Miracle.

"It was, however, necessary to leave the church. In a moment of bewilderment easily understood, M. Guerrier turned to call the porters. "Wait a moment," I said to him, "let her walk." And she set off with perfect liberty of movement and like a person who had never suffered in her legs. She went down to the Grotto by the winding paths, leaning on her husband's arm. There she knelt without help, and after praying a few moments went and bathed in the Piscina, where she left what little stiffness remained in her joints. She returned to Lourdes, walking most of the way that separates the town from the Grotto.

Her first care was to go and pray at the tomb of Mgr. Peyramale. From that moment, Reverend Father, as all have been able to prove, the cure has been absolute, and it only remains to thank Our Lady of Lourdes for it.

"Mme. Guerrier having expressed a wish to have a copy of these lines, I have thought it my duty to accede to her desire.

"Receive, Reverend Father, the assurance of my most respectfully devoted sentiments in Our Lord.

"M. MARTIGNON."

III.

In consequence of this report, and after the R. F. Sempé had made himself acquainted with the facts by interrogating M. and Mme. Guerrier, the Reverend Fathers published the cure in the number of the "*Annals of Our Lady of Lourdes*" of that same month (30th September, 1877), and mentioned it in these terms :—

"Mme. Guerrier of Beaune (Cote-d'Or) had suffered for three years from paralysis in the lower part of her body, caused by an affection of the spinal marrow. She was carried to the Basilica, where she heard Mass seated, and received Holy Communion in the same posture. Immediately after communicating she rose without help, and taking the arm of her husband, M. Guerrier, Justice of the Peace at Beaune, she went down to the Grotto on foot."

But through a mistake in the printing, the date indicated by the *Annals* was the 18th instead of the 16th. That error, rendered serious by the circumstances (since it is the date that so powerfully contributes to give its true character to the event), was rectified in the next number of a newspaper of Lourdes. The real date had been, besides, printed, on the day itself, by the same newspaper, and by the *Semaine liturgique de Marseille*, which, in the account given of the Marseilles pilgrimage, related in two words how the wife of M. Guerrier, Justice of the Peace at Beaune, had been miraculously cured on the Sunday, 16th September, at a mass in the Basilica, and that the pilgrims of Marseilles had seen her at the Grotto, walking like everyone else, after having seen her the evening before carried in a chair and placed before the statue of Mary.

IV.

On hearing of the death of the Abbé Martignon (too late, unfortunately, for him to arrive at Poitiers), M. Henri Lasserre made it his duty immediately to communicate the event to the family in whose favour that admirable priest had, eight months previously, accomplished his heroic sacrifice. He received in reply from M. Guerrier, a touching letter, of which the following are a few extracts:—

“DEAR SIR,

“I received your telegram yesterday informing me of the death of our good and revered friend, the Abbé Martignon. I need not tell you that we were moved to the depths of our hearts on receiving news for which nothing had prepared us. We had heard from our excellent friend on the 14th of this month. His letter, written with a firm hand, was like all those which had preceded it, and perhaps even in a greater degree full of delightful gaiety and warm, sincere affection ; he spoke in it of you, and complained that he had not heard from you for some time. He was going to write to you. How little we thought that his time was so near.

“We mourn for him as for a benefactor who has left us, but at the same time we rejoice in his happiness. . . . Is he not gone to the eternal home where God rewards souls like his with divine felicity ? Did he not love God above all else, and his neighbour more than himself even, in his ardent charity, going beyond the Divine precept ? Mme. Guerrier and I can bear witness to that, and never shall we forget it, as our prayers will prove to him.

“It seems to us, since yesterday, that our sadness is tempered by a sentiment of peace and joy similar to what is experienced by the certainty that one has another protector near the throne of God and the Immaculate Mother ! He loved the Blessed Virgin so much, and she gave such a special proof of her love for him on the 16th September, 1877 ! She has opened the gates of heaven to him in the month especially devoted to her.

“There is, however, one thing we regret. Canon Martignon

is gone without leaving us a remembrance that I asked him for in all my letters, and of which he never spoke in reply, evidently not intending to comply with my request.

"We do not possess his portrait. We could have wished to be able to bequeath it to our children, that they might never forget the features of him *by whose sacrifice their mother was cured*. Perhaps you have a photograph of him? Or you might know of one that we could have reproduced? We would give anything to have in one way or another a portrait of our dear Canon.

"ED. GUERRIER.

"BEAUNE, 28th May, 1878."

NOTE VI.

Text and translation of the Brief of His Holiness Pope Pius the Ninth, relative to the Book entitled "Our Lady of Lourdes".

DILECTO FILIO HENRICO LASSERRE.

"Dilecte fili, Salutem et Apostolicam Benedictionem.

"GRATULAMUR, tibi, Dilecte Fili, quod, insigni auctus beneficio, votum tuum accuratissimo studio diligentiaque exsolveris, et novam clementissimæ Dei Matris Apparitionem ita testatam facere curaveris, ut conflictu ipso humanæ malitiæ cum cœlesti misericordia claritas eventus firmior ac luculentior appareret.

"Omnes certe in proposita a te rerum serie perspicere poterunt: Religionem nostram sanctissimam vergere in veram popolorum utilitatem; confluentes ad se omnes supernis juxta et terrenis cumulare beneficiis; aptissimam esse ordini servando, vi etiam submota, concitados in turbis animorum motus, licet justos, compescere; iisque rebus sedulo adlaborare Clerum, eumque adeo abesse à superstitione fovenda ut imo segniorem se præbeat ac severiorem aliis omnibus in judicio edendo de factis, quæ naturæ vires excedere videntur.

"Nec minus aperte patebit, impietatem incassum indixisse Religioni bellum, et frustra machinationes hominum divinæ

Providentiæ consiliis obstare; quæ imo nequitia eorum et ausu sic uti consuevit, ut majorem inde quærat operibus suis splendorem et virtutem.

“Libentissime propterea excepimus volumen tuum cutitulus NOTRE DAME DE LOURDES; fore fidentes, ut quæ per mira potentiæ ac benignitatis suæ signa undique frequentissimo advenas accersit, scripto etiam tuo uti velit ad propagandam latius fovendamque in se pietatem hominum ac fiduciam, ut de plenitudine gratiæ ejus omnes accipere possint.

“Hujus, quem ominamur, exitus labori tuo auspicem accipe Benedictionem Apostolicam, quam tibi grati animi Nostri et paternæ benevolentiae testem peramentem impertimus.

“Datum Romæ, apud S. Petrum, die 4 Septembris, 1869, Pontificatus Nostri anno XXIV.

“PIUS, PAPA IX.”

TO HIS WELL-BELOVED SON, HENRY LASSERRE,
PIUS IX., POPE.

“To our well-beloved Son, greeting and apostolic benediction. Receive our congratulations, very dear Son. You, who were formerly favoured by a signal benefit, now scrupulously and lovingly accomplish the vow you then made; you have taken the utmost care to prove and establish the recent Apparitions of the most clement Mother of God; and that in such a manner that the very struggle of human malice against divine mercy only serves to bring into stronger and brighter relief the luminous evidence of the fact.

“In your exposition of the events, and in their connection and logical succession, all men may perceive with clearness and certainty how our most holy Religion turns to their real advantage; how it lavishes on them, not only heavenly and spiritual benefits, but also temporal and worldly advantages. They will see how Religion, even in the absence of material strength, is all-powerful in maintaining order; how, amidst excited multitudes, its influence restrains within just limits the outbursts of righteous indignation in the public mind. They will see, in short, how the clergy co-operate by their zeal and loyal efforts

in producing such results, and how, so far from favouring superstition, they are more circumspect and severe than the rest of the world in giving judgment on facts that apparently surpass the limits of natural power.

“Your narrative will throw an equally brilliant light on the evident truth that in vain does impiety make war on Religion, and in vain do the wicked strive to trammel, by human machinations, the divine counsels of Providence. The perversity of men and their criminal audacity serve, on the contrary, as means by which Providence sheds greater power and splendour on its works.

“Such are the reasons for which we receive with unfeigned joy your book entitled, *OUR LADY OF LOURDES*. We believe that she, who by the miracles of her power and goodness, draws from all parts multitudes of pilgrims to her sanctuary, will also make use of this book to propagate piety and confidence still more widely amongst men, and attract their hearts towards her, so that all may participate in the plenitude of her graces. As a pledge of the success we predict for your work, receive Our Apostolic Benediction which we send you most affectionately, in testimony of our gratitude, and our paternal good wishes.

“Given at Rome, at Saint Peter’s, the 4th September, 1869, of our Pontificate the 24th year.

“PIUS IX., POPE.”

NOTE VII.

LIST OF THE DIFFERENT LANGUAGES INTO WHICH THE WORK,
OUR LADY OF LOURDES, AND ITS ABRIDGED FORM
*THE MONTH OF MARY OF OUR LADY OF
 LOURDES*, HAS BEEN TRANSLATED.

EUROPE.

ENGLAND.

OUR LADY OF LOURDES, translated from the French of HENRY LASSERRE, by the Rev. F. IGNATIUS SISK. London: Thomas Richardson & Son.

THE MONTH OF MARY OF OUR LADY OF LOURDES, by HENRY LASSERRE, translated from the French by MRS. CROZIER.
London : Burns & Oates.

GERMANY.

UNSERE LIEBE FRAU VON LOURDES, herausgegeben von HEINRICH LASSERRE, von M. HOFFMANN. Freiburg in Breisgau, herder'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung.

MARIEN-MONAT UNSERER LIEBEN FRAU VON LOURDES, von HEINRICH LASSERRE Mit Genehmigung des Verfassers in's Deutsche übersetzt. Luxemburg : Druck und Verlag von Jacob Heintze.

BELGIUM.

O. L. VROUW VAN LOURDES, door HENDRICK LASSERRE, Gent (Gand). Boekdrukkerij van J. en H. Vander Schelden.

BRITTANY.

MIZ MARI AN ITRON VARIA LOURD, skrivet e gallek, Gant an aotrou HERRY LASSERRE, Ha Lakeet e Brezonek dre he aotre gant Anna a Jesus, leanez ar speret-santel. Brest : J. B. Lefournier. Kemper : E. Ty. Iann Salaun.

SPAIN.

NUESTRA SEÑORA DE LOURDES, por ENRIQUE LASSERRE Traducion de D. FRANCISCO MELGAR. Madrid libreria de D. Miguel Olamendi.

NUESTRA SEÑORA DE LOURDES, por ENRIQUE LASSERRE. Paris : Jouby y Roger, editores.

MES DE MARIA DE NEUSTRA SEÑORA DE LOURDES con oraciones. por ENRIQUE LASSERRE. Paris : A. Jouby y Roger, editores.

HOLLAND.

(Low Dutch Language.)

MAAND VAN MARIA ONZE LIEVE VROUW VAN LOURDES, door HENDRIK LASSERRE. Mei vergunning van den Schrijver vertaald door Vanwersch, S. J.—Amsterdam, J. Beerendonk.

HUNGARY.

FRANCIAORSZAG LOURDESI KEGYHELYE, írta LASSERE HENRIK, utan Talaber Janos. Buda—Pesth : Nyomatott a Hunyadi Matyas Irodalmi Intézetben.

ILLYRIA.

(Slavonic Language.)

LURSKA MATI BOZJA, francoski spisal HENRIK LASSERE ki je zavoljo te knjige dobil pohvalo in blagoslov od svoce ta, papeza Pija IX., poslovenil Frenjo Maresie.

ITALY.

NOSTRA SIGNORA DI LOURDES, per ENRICO LASSERRE, versione italiana per un Padre, D.C.D.G. Modena Typ. dell Imm. Concezione.

MESE DE MARIA DI NOSTRA SIGNORA DE LOURDES, con preghiere durante la S. Mess., de ENRICO LASSERRE, versione dal francese. Trento, Libreria di Eugenio Bernardi.

POLAND.

MIESAC MARYI, NABOZENSTWO DO MATKI BOSKIEJ z LOURDES, przez HENRYKA LASSERRE. Warszawa (Warsaw): Nakladem Ksiegarni Gebethnera i Wolffa.

PORTUGAL.

NOSSA SENHORA DE LOURDES, tradução do francez de HENRIQUE LASSERRE. Lisboa (Lisbon), Typographia universal.

NORTH AND SOUTH AMERICA.

Two Translations for America and two for Spain have been published in France with the authorisation of the Author:—

NUESTRA SEÑORA DE LOURDES, por ENRIQUE LASSERRE, traducción hecha con autorizacion y bajo la direccion del autor. Paris, Jouby y Roger, libreros-editores.

MES DE MARIA DE NUESTRA SEÑORA DE LOURDES, con oraciones, por ENRIQUE LASSERRE. Paris, Jouby y Roger.

Besides these Translations, the following have appeared in America:—

CHILI.

NUESTRA SEÑORA DE LURDES, obra escrita en frances por ENRIQUE LASSERRE, i traducida por Casanova i Errázuriz. Imprenta del correo, Santiago de Chile.

BRASIL.

NUESTRA SEÑORA DE LURDES, por ENRIQUE LASSERRE, Rio-di-Janeiro.

REPUBLIC OF NEW GRENADA.

NUESTRA SEÑORA DE LOURDES, por ENRIQUE LASSERRE Bogotá.

UNITED STATES.

OUR LADY OF LOURDES, by HENRY LASSERRE, translated from the French. New York : D. & J. Saddler & Co.

This list, though numerous, is still incomplete. There exist, besides those already noted, translations that we have been unable to procure. Besides which, the printing characters for the translations into oriental languages published at Pondichery and Shanghai are wanting.

Most of these translations, like the original work, have passed through several editions. Faith in Our Lady of Lourdes has spread through the whole world, and has become one of the treasures of the Church.

The following are the letters which serve as introduction to "THE JOINER OF LAVAU," and were accidentally overlooked in translating the book :—

We, the undersigned : CHARLES MACARY, joiner, son of François Macary ; MARIE BONAFOUS (*née* Macary), his sister ; P. BONAFOUS, priest, professor at the Little Seminary, his nephew ; having read the narrative entitled "THE JOINER OF LAVAU," do hereby attest its absolute authenticity. The facts are therein related precisely as François Macary used to tell them,—as we, the members of his family have witnessed them, and as they are publicly known to all the town of Lavour.

C. MACARY.

P. BONAFOUS.

MARIE BONAFOUS.

LAVAU, 7th June, 1882. _____

I, the undersigned, Curé-Archpriest at Lavour, add my testimony to that of the family Macary, in proof of the authenticity of M. Henri Lasserre's narrative.

ROQUES, Curé-Archpriest of Lavour.

LAVAU, 16th June, 1884.

LAGRAVE, 25th January, 1883.

TO MONSIEUR LASSERE.

HONOURED SIR,

As you desire to have the witness of my testimony, I send it you most willingly and with all my heart. Your narrative *is the truthful account of an event* which will ever remain one of the most cherished remembrances of my life as a priest. You have made a really living portrait of François Macary. In reading the history I exclaimed, "It is himself ! his ardent, figurative language ; his intelligent and energetic character". . . . I feel convinced that the pages you have devoted to him will do good to those who may be fortunate enough to read them, and that the Holy and Immaculate Virgin will reward your efforts.

Receive, Monsieur, the homage of my profound respect,

J. COUX,

Curé of Lagrave (diocèse of Albi).

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